Volume Forty-Five, Number Four, April *1968*

Commentary

The Battle of the Pentagon by Norman Mailer

Election '68
Voting the Lesser Evil *Michael Harrington*

On Not Being a Jew *Edward Hoagland*
Hebrew Between Two Worlds *Robert Alter*
Fantasy & Circumstance *John Thompson*
Theater Chronicle *Jack Richardson*

Books in Review

Walter Goodman *Amos Elon* *Richard Poirier*
Denis Donoghue *Norman Birnbaum*

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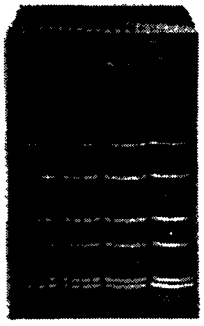

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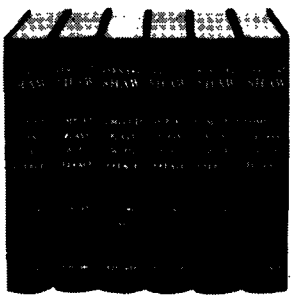

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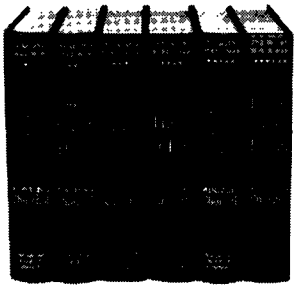

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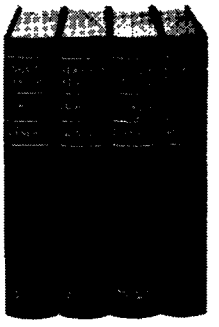

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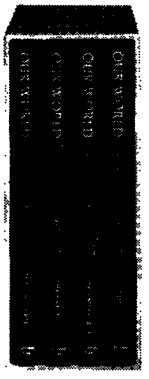

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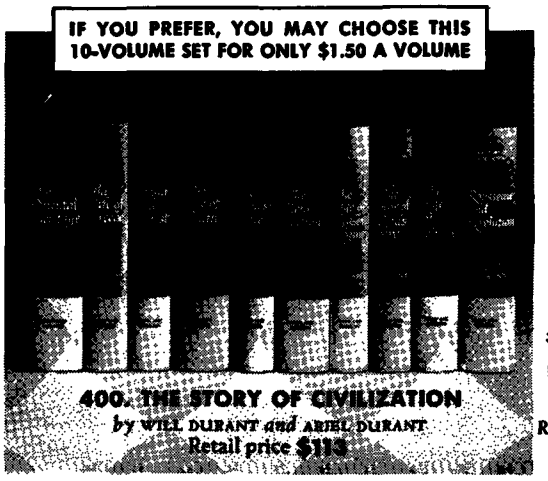

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Commentary

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Editor: Norman Podhoretz

Associate Editors: Werner J. Dannhauser, Neal Kozodoy, Marion Magid

Contributing Editors: Milton Himmelfarb, George Lichtheim

Assistant to the Editor: Martha Goldstein

Editorial Assistant: Kathie Gordon

General Manager: Martin Edelston

Circulation Manager: Ronald Greene

Typography: Ira Teichberg

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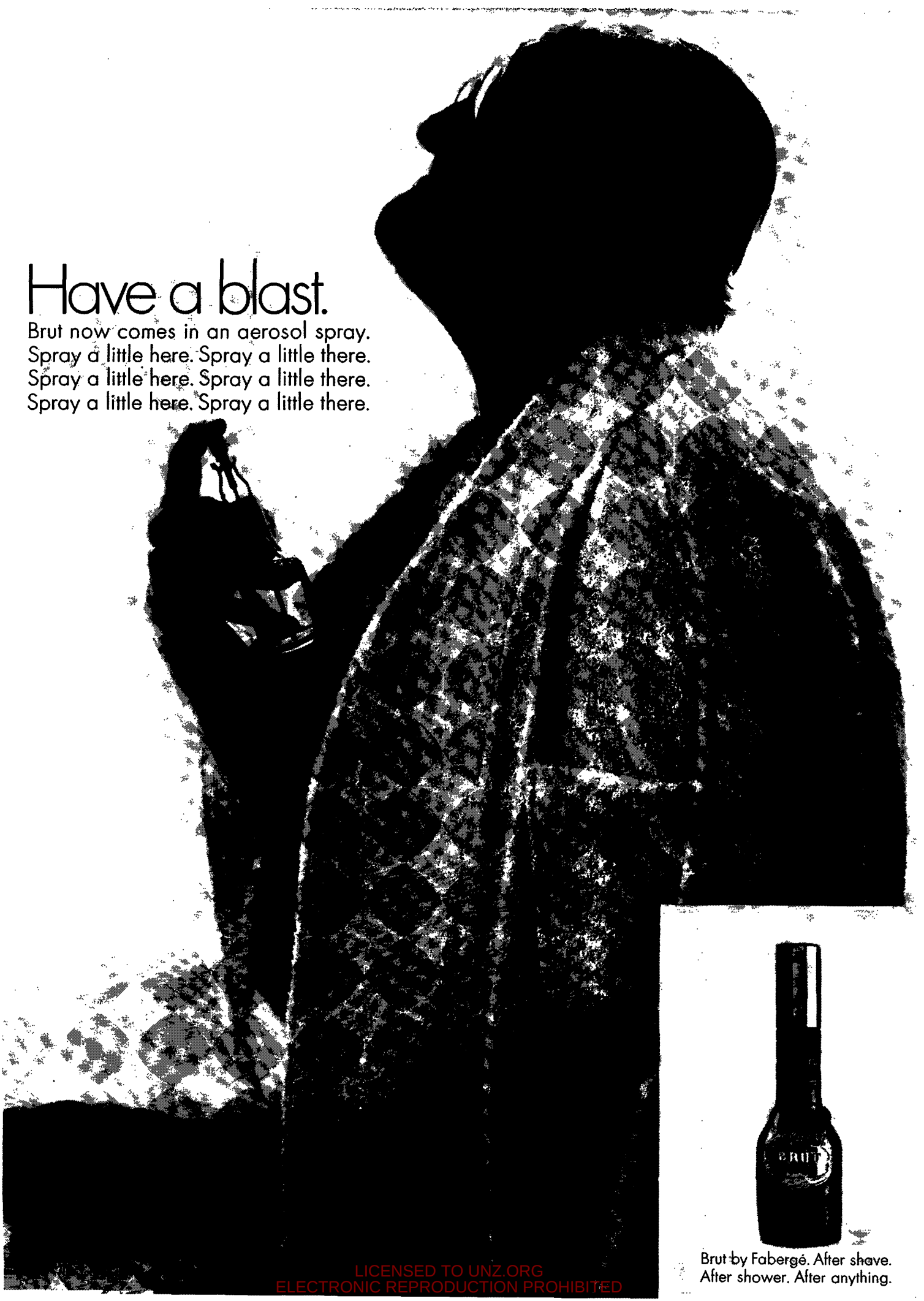
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Letters from Readers

Jews with Money

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I want to thank you for Marshall Sklare's long, thoughtful, and most interesting review of my book ["The Trouble with *'Our Crowd,'*" January]. I'm fascinated that Mr. Sklare, as a critic, was able to get at so much of the behind-the-scenes stuff that went on, prior to and after publication of the book, among the "crowd"—stuff I thought no one knew but a few of the people at Harper and myself.

On a less frivolous note . . . I find nearly every point in the review to be both valid and enlightening. I would dispute Mr. Sklare on only two matters. I don't agree, first, with his interpretation of Jacob Schiff's behavior when it came to trying to get his son into Groton—that Schiff felt "Groton should have been happy to enroll a Schiff." No, I see his behavior here as merely another example of one of his outstanding traits of personality; he would never do anything for anyone without demanding a concession in return; there was always a proviso attached to everything he did. This was the way he did business and the way he ran his life and family. He would buy his son a bicycle, provided the boy would accept a second-hand bicycle; he would buy the boys in the Amherst fraternity house a pool table, provided they would promise never to play pool for money (so they never got their table); he would give $50,000 to the YMHA building fund, provided Louis Marshall gave another $50,000. (It was, incidentally, Schiff who invented the "matching gift system," so common today.) Morti could go to Groton, provided the school would not require him to go to chapel. So it went—always. If his conditions were not met, that was the end of it; he never retreated from them. So I do not agree that his behavior in the Groton episode displays an aristocratic attitude—autocratic, perhaps. I may be wrong, but I don't think so, and I think most people who knew Mr. Schiff when he was alive will agree with me.

Another point, less important, but a bit surprising: Mr. Sklare's review, I think, leaves the impression that a certain amount of publishing cupidity was involved in the decision to do the book—that Harper & Row cannily decided to cash in on a ready market. Mr. Sklare doesn't say this, I know, but I think he implies it. I assure you that no one has been more surprised by the book's success than Harper & Row. When I submitted the script, the reaction was of such guarded enthusiasm that one might have mistaken it for gloom. I was told that the book was pretty "special," that it "might do well in New York," but that I was not to expect it to do well anywhere else. All the book clubs turned it down for the same reasons, and all the magazines it was submitted to did likewise. The book's first printing was of a very modest size and, indeed, when the book started selling Harper was caught short and was out of stock for two weeks. So if the publisher had "commercial considerations" in connection with doing my book, he certainly didn't consider very well.

Again, Mr. Sklare takes me to task for quoting dialogue from people long dead. He forgets, perhaps, that there are people alive today who remember their immigrant ancestors quite well, and who have firsthand recollections of what this or that person said. Carola Warburg Rothschild, for example, remembers not only (obviously) her father, Felix Warburg, but her grandfather, Jacob Schiff, and her great-grandfather, Solomon Loeb, the immigrant founder of Kuhn, Loeb who came here from Germany in 1849. From a historian's point of view, is there anything wrong with directly quoting deceased people from what those who are living remember was said at the time?

And a final point: . . . it was Washington *Seligman,* not Washington Guggenheim, who ate charcoal and ice cubes. His sister was a Mrs. Guggenheim (Peggy's mother).

But all the foregoing aside, I think Mr. Sklare's review is splendidly sensible, enormously perceptive, and I'm awfully proud to have it. . . .

STEPHEN BIRMINGHAM
Rye, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his informative critique of Stephen Birmingham's book, *"Our Crowd"* [January], Marshall Sklare . . . takes German Jews to task as follows: "While long on family loyalty, the German Jew has al-

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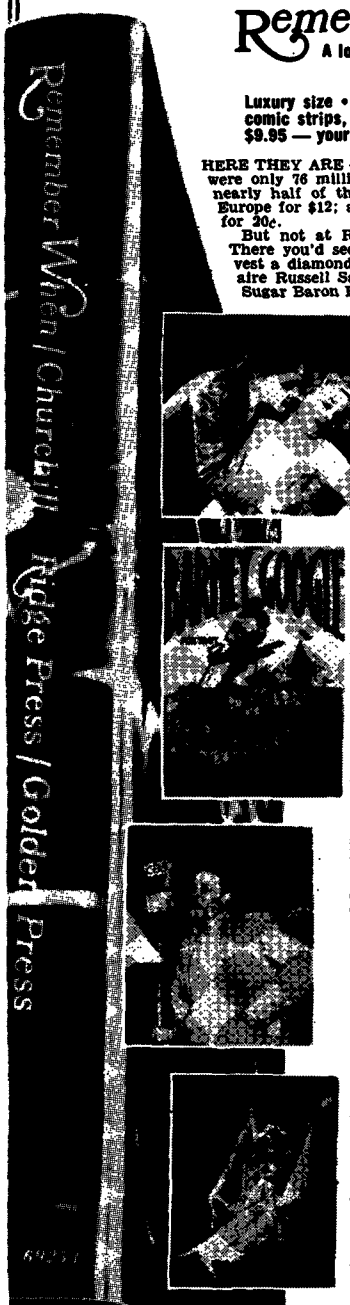

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They'd be talking about the magnificent new Flatiron Building ("Don't you get dizzy 20 stories up?"). Enoch the Fish Man, who played his trombone solo under water. Jim Europe, Negro bandleader who sired big-band "jass." Flickering flicks and galloping tintypes. Poet Harry Kemp, who made headlines by appearing on the street without a hat (in Greenwich Village, naturally), and again without a tie. Early ad slogans: "Four Out of Five Have It" . . . "Spring! For everyone else but her" . . . "A Sensible Cigarette" . . . "Even Your Best Friends Won't Tell You."

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And more! The market goes crazy. "Go cook a radish." Mayor Big Bill Thompson finds a man he can run against, and beat: the King of England. The Black Age of Crime: Hall-Mills, Legs Diamond, Johnny Torrio, Snyder-Gray, Dion O'Banion, Leopold and Loeb, Big Frenchy DeMange, Bugs Moran, Hymie Weiss (every day, without fail, he went to church to light a candle), Dutch Schultz, and the Big Guy himself.

The Era of Wonderful Nonsense. Peaches and Daddy Browning. Shipwreck Kelly, the Luckiest Fool Alive: he wooed a redhead from atop his flagpole, climbed down to marry her. The Rocking-Chair Derby. How crooning was born. C. C. Pyle and his transcontinental walking race, the Bunion Derby.

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The list goes on and on. The Street Singer. Garbo. Barrymore. Fred Allen. Harry Richman. Moran and Mack. Jimmy Fidler. Uncle Don. The Mills Brothers. Ben Bernie (did he and Winchell *really* hate each other?). Just Plain Bill. Annette Henshaw. The Red-Headed Music Maker. Singin' Sam. King Kong. Whiteman. Bing. Hundreds more!

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There was Mae West (some bimbo!) murmuring, "When I'm good, I'm very good; but when I'm bad, I'm better." Dizzy Dean and brother Daffy. Knickers. Tea in tin boxes. Dance marathons. Betty Furness on early TV struggling with the vacuum cleaner. Hollywood stars under the lids of dixie cups. "$30 Every Thursday": Senator Downey and his Ham-and-Eggs Crusade. S.A. "It."

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ways been short on religious enthusiasm." . . .

First of all, I would question the wisdom of so sweeping a generalization about any group. . . . But secondly, I wonder what Mr. Sklare means by "religious enthusiasm."

. . . It is difficult indeed to picture German Jewish "aristocrats" . . . such as Felix M. Warburg, Henry Morgenthau, and Herbert H. Lehman . . . dancing around in the synagogue, their arms linked, a Torah scroll in their arms. . . . Mr. Sklare could hardly expect that kind of enthusiasm from *any* Jew except a Hasid. What, then, are the "aristocrats" to do? Are they to follow Orthodox Jewish practices? If that were a requirement for "religious enthusiasm," Mr. Sklare would be offending hundreds of thousands of American Jews who feel they are "good Jews," religiously speaking, and who follow Conservative or Reform practices. . . .

Nor could Mr. Sklare possibly find fault with the German Jew for being lax in founding and supporting synagogues or temples, because he has a fine record in this regard. Nor could he refer to attendance by German Jews at religious services . . .—for they are no better and no worse in this respect than other Jews.

There is, moreover, a further and very fundamental point to be made in this connection. It has been fashionable for many years to criticize the German Jew as an assimilationist, and to contrast him with the Jew of Eastern European origin who is said to be more religiously observant, and possessed of a much stronger ethnic feeling. While this may have been correct in the past, . . . it is less true of the present situation in America. American Jews are being integrated at every level . . . and in this process, undesirable changes are also taking place. Hundreds of thousands never see a synagogue from the inside; intermarriage is rising rapidly, *aliya* to Israel is down to a trickle. If this is not assimilation, what is? In fact, the point has been made that the American Jew is assimilating faster than the German Jew ever did. . . .

ERNEST MAASS
Jamaica, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Marshall Sklare's article raises a number of questions that cannot properly be discussed within a strictly American context. . . .

The phenomenon of "Our Crowd" deserves to be studied more scientifically, by comparing it to Jewish establishments—whether of German or Sephardic origin—that have developed in other societies; it should be discussed, for instance, in terms of aristocrats of finance, like the Rothschild and Sassoon families, or an aristocracy of political or literary eminence like the D'Israelis and Palgraves in 19th-century London. "Our Crowd" could also usefully be compared with the Parsee financial and industrial élite which grew up in 19th-century Bombay. There a small, similarly intermarried group —the Tata, Wadia, Jehangir, Dadabhoy, and Dinsha families—belonging to an entirely different religious minority, endowed this Indian metropolis with almost as astounding a number of philanthropic and cultural institutions as New York owes to "Our Crowd."

Secondly, we still need objective and properly documented studies of the ties that may originally have existed between "Our Crowd" in New York and the more established Jewish business-elites of the Old World. The Jewish bullion-brokers of London and some Alsatian-Jewish Paris banking families, for instance, once had extensive financial interests in San Francisco's business world, at the time of the Gold Rush and in the ensuing decades. (San Francisco's "The White House" department store, to take one example, was founded by a Frenchman, Raphaël Weill, who was a cousin of the Paris bankers, Lazare Frères.) But New York . . . soon began to attract most of these European-Jewish financiers as a more permanent base for their activities in the New World. . . .

Again, many well-established Old-World Jewish families tended at first to have only limited faith in the New-World enterprises of New York's "Our Crowd." Communications between Wall Street and London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Vienna were not yet developed to the point where European investors could know at a moment's notice, as they can today, . . . exactly where they stood in American financial markets. Nor were they made more confident by the fact that many of the early entrepreneurs of "Our Crowd" had originally emigrated to America as the black sheep or unwelcome poor relations of European-Jewish families which were already prosperous. My own maternal grandfather,

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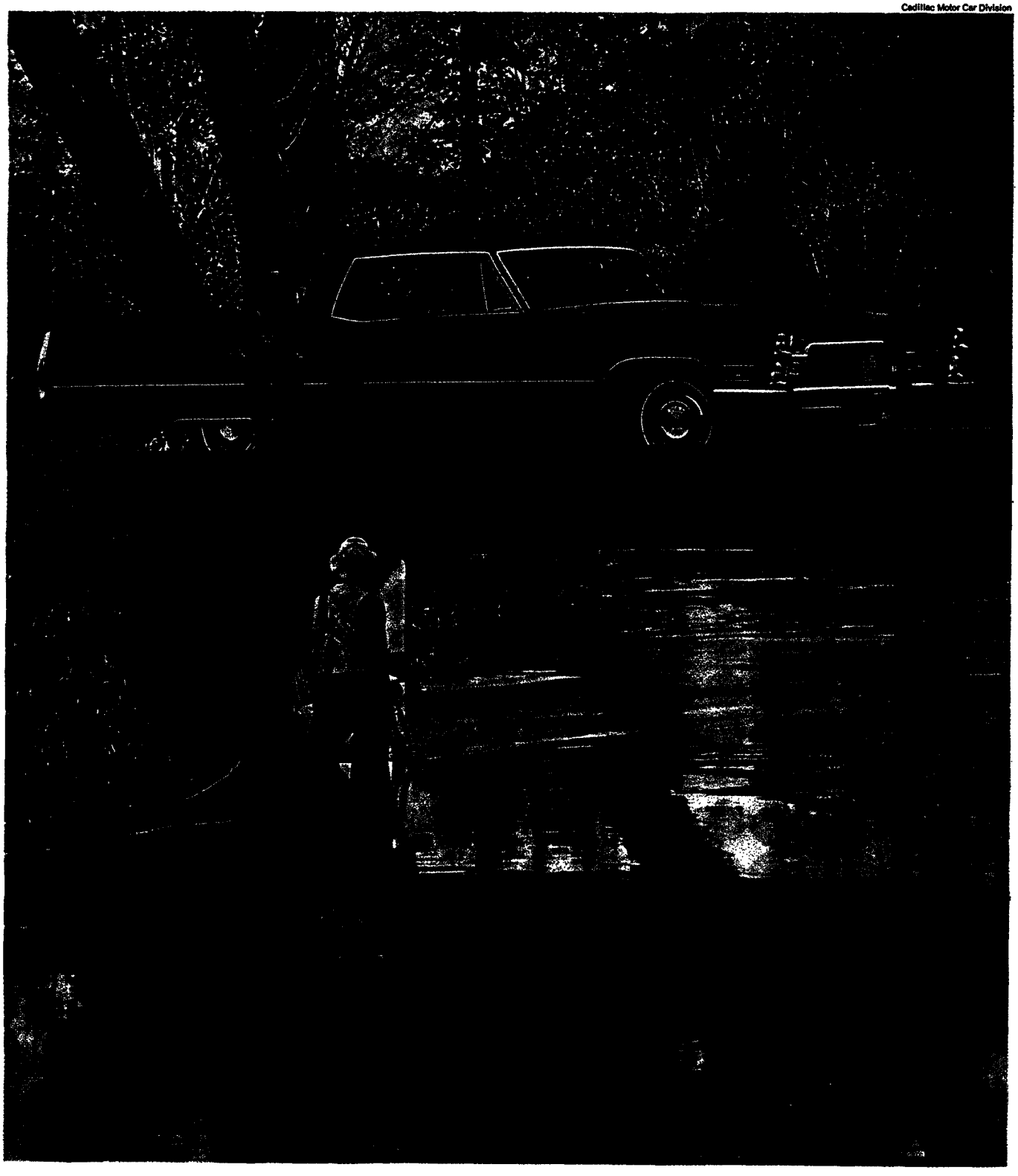

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the late Felix Waldheim, who . . . was a partner in the London textile firm of Waldheim, Guggenheim, and Florsheim, had been one of the original investors in the mining ventures of the poor American cousin of his well-to-do partner, Moritz Guggenheim, a native of Baden, near Zurich. But my grandfather had little faith in the future of these ventures and sold out as soon as he was assured of a profit. He then invested heavily in such things as the rayon industry in Tsarist Russia, which he considered much safer.

My paternal grandfather's family, on the other hand, remained for many decades in a close business association, as exporters of European and Far-Eastern manufactured goods, with the department-store-owning members of "Our Crowd." Yet my father's family never invested in their ventures, nor did it intermarry with their families, perhaps because we were Sefardim and closely related to titled European Sefardic families. . . . An alliance with a family whose wealth was more recent might have been socially compromising in the eyes of the European Gentile aristocracy with which we already had some social contacts.

From my own boyhood I can remember only two "Our Crowd" families which were considered socially acceptable, around 1920, in Paris and London society: the Schiffs and the Blumenthals. In Germany, the New York branches of the Warburg, Ladenburg, Seligman, and Strauss families were also considered acceptable, mainly because their German relatives had already been received in Prussian Court circles before 1914. The King family of New York, however —which originally emigrated to America from England—constituted a notable exception in this respect; though the family was soon absorbed into "Our Crowd," it retained from its origins in Chester a distinctive quality of Early Victorian refinement. Later, the three Stettheimer sisters, Florine, Ettie, and Carrie, who were related to the Seligman banking family, also achieved a peculiar distinction of their own in an international intellectual élite which included Marcel Duchamp and the New York Dadaists of 1917. . . .

This leads us to . . . "Our Crowd" 's claim to be "the closest thing to aristocracy" that New York or America has seen. In Europe, the various equivalents of "Our Crowd," whether of Sefardic or German origin, achieved acknowledgment long ago as members of the recognized aristocracy of several different nations, without necessarily abjuring their Jewish faith. Though Benjamin Disraeli was baptized even before being elected to the House of Commons, Jewish peers have now been able to sit in the House of Lords for over a hundred years without having to become Christians. In 1923, when I attended Charterhouse, one of the most exclusive English "public schools," my Jewish classmates could be excused from attendance at Anglican chapel-services if they went to a synagogue instead. This happened to prove very inconvenient, however, so that practically none of us availed ourselves of a privilege that would not have been granted us in America at Groton. . . .

England's Jewish aristocracy perhaps owes its real distinction to the fact that it has never been exclusively recruited from the worlds of finance, industry, and "trade," but has always included men who owed their titles to their achievements in more traditionally aristocratic fields of public service—like the late Marquis of Reading—or in science and the arts. True aristocracy, it would seem, can be achieved only by adopting the standards of a recognized existing aristocracy. But New York's WASP robber barons failed, in this respect, to be generally recognized as aristocrats, even though they refused to accept Otto Kahn as their equal in the Metropolitan Opera's "Diamond Horseshoe." "Our Crowd" was thus left somehow suspended in mid-air, with no real star to which to hitch its wagon. Hence the deplorable tendency of these families to marry . . . so many of their daughters off to dubious and dollar-hungry scions of a déclassé European aristocracy rather than to what a Jewish Henry James might have called "the real thing"—a Rothschild or a Camondo who still scorned them. "Our Crowd" thus remained, even as recently as the 20's, almost as isolated in New York . . . as Bombay's Parsee establishment which, in spite of a number of British baronetcies and knighthoods, never made the grade in London society as successfully as, for instance, the Sassoon and Khadoorie families, Baghdadian Jews who made their fortunes in Bombay, Calcutta, Shanghai, and Hong Kong.

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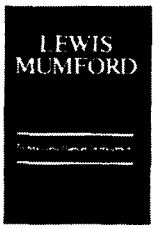

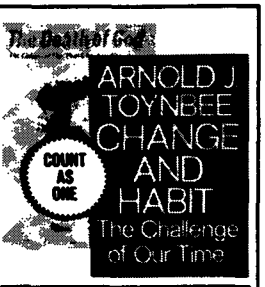

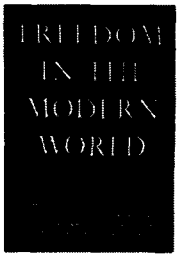

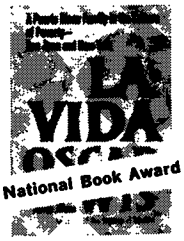

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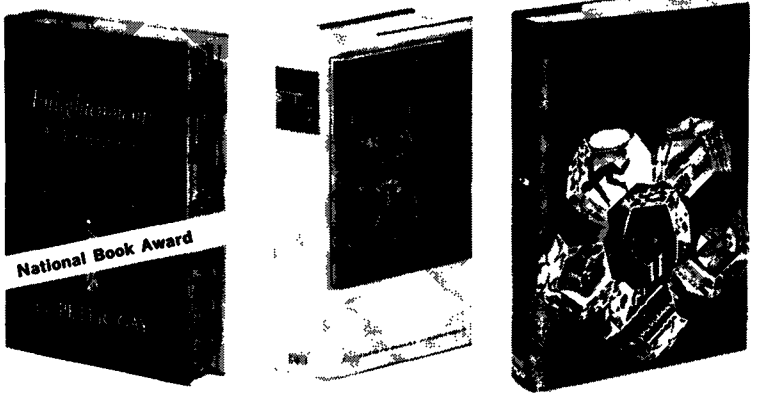

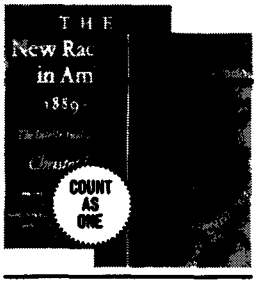

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In conclusion, one can only hope that the popular success of Stephen Birmingham's *"Our Crowd"* will now have an important side effect: to inspire more scholarly historians to undertake the research that might later lead to a systematic comparative study of the socio-economic phenomenon of a minority's decisive role in the financial and cultural life of a world metropolis.

EDOUARD RODITI
Department of English
Brown University
Providence, Rhode Island

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I found Marshall Sklare's observations on Stephen Birmingham's *"Our Crowd"* somewhat offensive.

I myself had previously read and reviewed the book. I agreed with Sklare that the book was intellectually thin and written in a style calculated to provide entertainment rather than edification. The German-Jewish upper class that grew up in 19th-century America played a very important role in the economic life of this country, as well as of Europe, in the years between the Civil War and World War I. Yet the general reading public is not keenly interested in abstract economic history; it is, however, always interested in anecdotes about the weaknesses of the rich, whether Gentile or Jew. Birmingham, an accomplished writer, knows this, and the book has been on the best-seller lists for some time now. And he quite naturally devoted more space in the book to the bizarre doings of Adolph Lewisohn than to the real accomplishments of Herbert Lehman, to the social climbing of Otto Kahn rather than the brilliant leadership role played by his Kuhn, Loeb partner, Jacob Schiff. I too was bored with this approach. Where I part with Sklare is when he jumps from this quite valid criticism and goes on to say that "Birmingham dotes on Lewisohn," that "while Birmingham always interprets Kahn's behavior in the most favorable terms, he shows no such partiality to Jacob Schiff." Here Sklare has simply missed the point. Birmingham is just catering to the public. How many writers about "High Society" have devoted far more space to the Gentile counterparts of Otto Kahn or Adolph Lewisohn than to the accomplishments of such socialites as Franklin Roosevelt or Adlai Stevenson? This is the nature of the beast and not Birmingham's fault.

Sklare, moreover, does not rest here; instead he goes on to accuse Birmingham of latent, if not blatant, anti-Semitism. This, I think, is unfair. Nor do I like the conspiratorial way in which Sklare opens his observations by going into details about how the book was conceived by a "non-Jewish" publishing house, seeming to imply that Harper & Row (which I have always thought of as a first-rate publisher, period, rather than as a good "non-Jewish" one) are also anti-Semitic. Since when have reviewers felt the need to discuss the ethnicity of publishers and authors when evaluating a book? Or have ethnic politics now moved over into the literary world? This book, then, is no more anti-Semitic than Josephson's *Robber Barons* or Lundberg's *America's 60 Families* were anti-Gentile. Nor, I should imagine, was Manchester's *Death of a President* (published by the same "non-Jewish" firm) anti-Catholic, although it hardly pleased the Kennedy clan.

In the same vein, Sklare goes on to criticize both Birmingham and myself for admiring the aristocrat-

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ic virtues but at the same time feeling that the only good Jews are, as he puts it, "Gentile aristocrats." This is simply not the case on my part, nor on Birmingham's as I read him. I prefer Schiff to Kahn. As Sklare ought to know, all social climbers, whether Gentile or Jew, lack self-respect and suffer from greater or lesser degrees of self-hate. And it is surely not a matter of ethnicity but of temperament and moral fiber. One might as well go into their ethnic origins when discussing the differences between Perle Mesta and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Sklare's style of criticism is nicely revealed in the following lines:

> Baltzell shares Birmingham's admiration for Jews and he too ascribes great virtue to them, but as Richard L. Rubenstein has argued, he focuses his criticism on the rejection by the WASP establishment of the assimilating Jew, rather than on the treatment accorded to the Jew who wishes to preserve his separate identity. Both Baltzell and Birmingham view assimilation as the price the minority should be willing to pay for its acceptance by the majority. Thus, in their very criticism of the shortcomings of the WASP establishment, they reveal how deeply they share its assumptions.

Both men having last names beginning with "B" and both men being non-Jews, they could, I suppose, hardly be expected to do otherwise. But to be more serious: though I do not presume to speak for Birmingham, I myself do not ascribe "great virtue" to Jews in general but rather to some men who happen to be Jews and *not* to others; on the whole but not always, moreover, I do tend to admire Jews who prefer to preserve their identity more than those who try to hide it. What I do *not* approve of is racism, one aspect of which is the proclivity to attribute a man's virtues or vices to his ethnic origins, to fail to react to the man rather than a Jew's son or grandson. I consider it immoral to speak of a "Jewish-Episcopalian." It is, I have thought, the democratic way to allow a man freely to choose his religion.

We live in a secular age when the family has been replaced as the main socializing agency by the school and the university. One cannot discuss the role of the private school, the country club, or the prestige universities, from the point of view of their forever needing revitalization by men of talent in each generation, without discussing the social dysfunctions and just plain inhumanity of treating men of non-WASP origins unfairly because of their ancestors. And regardless of how Sklare feels about the survival of Judaism, parents who send their children to institutions like Groton or Princeton are encouraging them to lose their ethnic identity. If I read the modern American scene rightly, there are quite a few wealthy, ethnic parents who want their children to go to such institutions, where, in contrast to the situation in Endicott Peabody's day, they will assimilate WASP ethnicity if not, certainly, Christianity. Finally, I do not share the assumptions of all too many members of the WASP upper class in this country; for most of them wish that all Jews would remain apart and protect their identity as Jews, much more in the style of Marshall Sklare's preferences than mine.

Incidentally, Birmingham notes that today at Kuhn, Loeb the partners include a Schiff and a Kahn. The Schiff grandson is listed in the Social Register, while the Kahn grandson is not. I suppose, if Sklare reads my values rightly, I should prefer Mr. Schiff to Mr. Kahn. I know neither man. I should imagine, however, not necessarily and perhaps quite to the contrary.

E. DIGBY BALTZELL
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MR. SKLARE writes:

E. Digby Baltzell cannot be serious in contending that I think Stephen Birmingham is an anti-Semite. The point I made was that Birmingham was philo-Semitic, which of course creates its own set of problems, like projecting onto Jews the virtues which Birmingham feels are wanting in contemporary American society. Since Birmingham does not mention my charging him with anti-Semitism, Baltzell can rest easy on this score.

I regret that my reference to Harper & Row as a "non-Jewish" publisher so irritates Professor Baltzell that he charges me with irrelevancy and playing ethnic politics. Again, he burdens me with making an accusation of anti-Sem-

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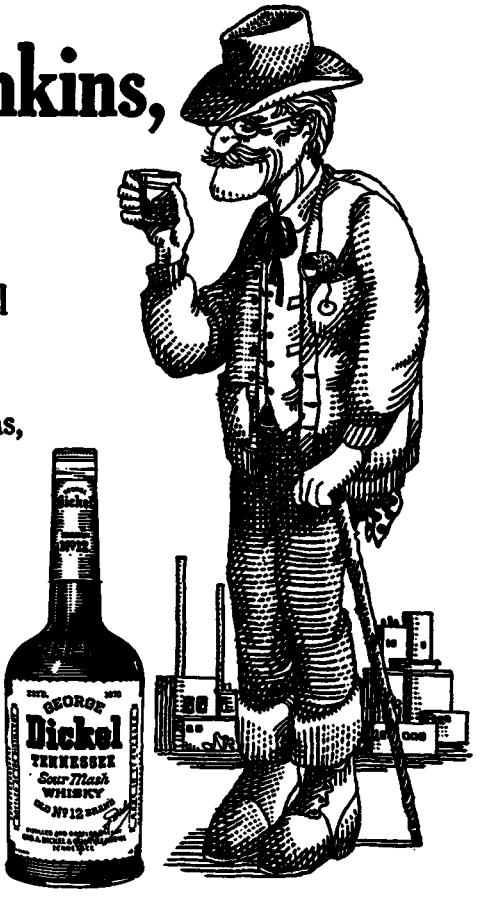

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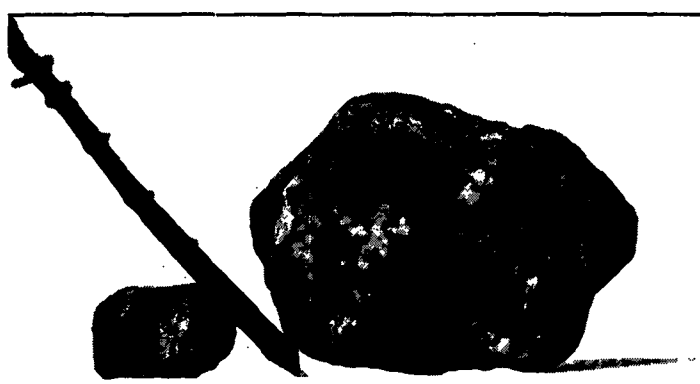

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itism where none was intended. My point, of course, was that *"Our Crowd"* shows just how popular a non-fiction book about Jews can be. Professor Baltzell, who has devoted much study to the upper class of Philadelphia, will recall that in 1888 the Jewish Publication Society of America was established in his city. The JPS was a necessity because books of Jewish interest were unattractive to all but ethnic publishers; this is no longer the case.

I have no doubt that Professor Baltzell prefers individuals of stern moral fiber but this preference—noble in itself—is irrelevant. What is at stake is the choice of societal models. I prefer a pluralist model; it is clear from Professor Baltzell's book, *The Protestant Establishment*, that he does not. His book demonstrates exactly what he says it does: ". . . the social dysfunctions and just plain inhumanity of treating men of non-WASP origins unfairly because of their ancestors." Baltzell's protest, then, is about the exclusion of men whose *ancestors* are Jewish—men who concede the authority and the superiority of the WASP establishment. What he says is that it is both stupid and cruel to exclude such men. In his second chapter ("La Guardia, Weinberg, and Others") he gets to the heart of the matter with the case of Sidney Weinberg:

> In his *Who's Who* biography . . . [Weinberg] lists no affiliations with specifically Jewish organizations, and most of the boards on which he serves (such as that of the Presbyterian Hospital) are composed primarily of Gentiles. But in spite of all this his friends are unable or unwilling to declassify him. At their club at least, he is not a unique individual but a member of a category, a category called *The Jews*.

To those who choose the pluralist model, the problem is not so much the status occupied by that group whose ancestors are Jewish as it is the position accorded in society to those who retain their identity, and who, by virtue of this fact, refuse to concede the authority and superiority of the WASP establishment.

I do find Professor Baltzell's response cheering, however. Sensitivity about the full implications of "Anglo-Saxon conformity," as sociologist Milton Gordon would probably term his position, is all to the good. Would that others shared this sensitivity.

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Correction

To the Editor of Commentary:

In his interesting discussion on Che Guevara in the December 1967 issue ["The Legacy of Che Guevara"], Norman Gall quotes an article from the *Economist* and, in the next paragraph, gives the reader his interpretation of it. I should be glad if you would give me the space to record that Mr. Gall's interpretation is not what the *Economist* thinks; that it is, indeed, more or less the exact opposite; and that your readers will not find, either in that issue of the *Economist* or any other, the views that Mr. Gall apparently attributes to us.

Brian Beedham
Foreign Editor
The *Economist*
London, England

Kudo

To the Editor of Commentary:

Maurice Goldbloom's article in the December 1967 issue ["What Happened in Greece"] was a lucid and persuasive analysis of the bewildering series of events that led to the situation currently facing us in Greece. I was especially intrigued by Mr. Goldbloom's clarification of the factional splits existing within the Greek army and with his comments on the politics of Andreas Papandreou.

When I first read the article, I was sufficiently impressed by it to feel that it merited wider circulation. . . . This feeling was shared by Congressman Don Edwards of California and at his suggestion I have inserted Mr. Goldbloom's article, in its entirety, in the *Congressional Record.*

Benjamin S. Rosenthal
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

The Status of Israel

To the Editor of Commentary:

Is Israel the Jewish state? There is probably no more crucial and, in a sense simple, question in Jewish life today. It is discouraging to find a man of Professor Shlomo Avineri's caliber avoiding meaningful discussion of it, indeed even escaping from it, in the relentless progression of distortions and outright misrepresentations which characterized his review of my book, *The Aryanization of the Jewish State* [December 1967].

Avineri's first substantive charge is that I failed to imply what I meant in referring to what I called the fundamental Zionist ambition of "Aryanizing" the Jewish people. Obviously I cannot repeat here all the points I made in the two chapters which I devoted to this matter, the first dealing primarily with the image of the East European Jew and his *shtetl* as projected in the novels of the *Maskilim;* the second with Herzl's bizarre utopia, *Altneuland.* It seems to me that the evidence contained in those chapters rather convincingly illustrates the contention that the Zionists acknowledged the validity of anti-Semitic stereotypes of the Jew and sought to build a new Jewish society which would aim at placating those stereotypes. Avineri however dismisses all this evidence as one-sided and distorted. Yehezkel Kauf-

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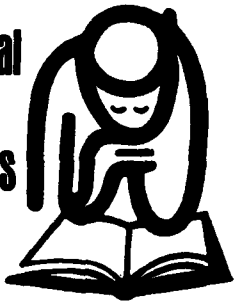

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Judges: F. W. Dupee, Hilton Kramer, Wylie Sypher

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Atlantic-Little, Brown
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Death at an Early Age
Houghton Mifflin Co.
Judges: Rene Dubos, Philip Morrison, Edward Shils

most distinguished translation
HOWARD AND EDNA HONG
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mann, the eminent Zionist publicist and distinguished Hebrew University biblical scholar whom I cited, was hardly of this opinion. "We have been suffering from the disease of Jewish anti-Semitism," he wrote, "ever since the Haskalah. . . . The poison that flows from Jewish nationalist sources is perhaps the most dangerous of them all. . . . Zionism actually *based* [my emphasis] the national movement on a rationale of charges that it took over from the anti-Semites and endeavored to find a core of justice in the hatred of Jews."

The only substantive point in this section of the discussion which Avineri attributes to me is the Zionist postulate of inverting the allegedly "lopsided" occupational pyramid of East European Jewry. A distinguished professor of political science should know better than to accept as axiomatic the postulates of a political movement with a highly sophisticated propaganda machine. The Russian census of 1897 (the first ever taken) revealed that 21 per cent of all factory workers in the Pale were Jews and that more Jews were employed in manufacturing than in commerce or agriculture. Yet even at that late date there were 190,000 Jews engaged in agriculture, for the most part the hardy remnants of the Jewish colonization of Siberia undertaken during the reign of Nicholas 1. Surely this data, discussed in my book, suggests that if the Jewish social structure in East Europe was neither "viable nor commendable" (Avineri's words) then it was so because of *the lack of a middle class* rather than because of what the Zionists enjoyed calling Jewish middle-class "parasitism."

Another point on which Avineri comes across as a propagandist rather than as the serious thinker which I know him to be: if, as he suggests, the massacre of six million Jews by the Nazis proved that Dubnow was "wrong" and the Zionists "right," then how does he explain the fact that our ears have been ringing all this summer with strident, panicky reminders of the danger of a new genocide in the Middle East if Israel had been conquered?

Most inconclusive is Avineri's discourse on the Oriental problem in Israel. It strikes me as sheer dishonesty—prompted no doubt by an understandable impulse of guilt—that he should have written "the only concrete example cited by Selzer to prove his thesis of 'cultural genocide' is the Israeli law prohibiting polygamy." I did in fact develop and demonstrate this thesis with a large number of examples on pages 62 to 78 of my book: one of the indications of this policy which I discussed most closely was the question of school curricula on which Avineri himself comments in his review. Was he not aware that the imposition of a Western curriculum (in such subjects as literature, history, and even geography) on a preponderantly Oriental student body could be regarded as an instance of "cultural genocide"? As a sophisticated . . . and eminent European Israeli, Professor Avineri should surely have acknowledged the distinction between "modernization" and "Westernization." But perhaps not: while accusing *me* of "genteel paternalistic racism" for suggesting that it is possible to be both non-Western *and* "modern," Avineri caustically asks if I propose that Israel should "cut out science and math in school? Turn the Weizmann Institute into an Academy for Mysticism? Dismantle industry, turn Israeli farmers into *fellahin*?" This racism is neither genteel nor paternalistic; . . . it confirms beautifully my point that social thinking in Israel is conditioned by an outdated, racist social Darwinism which assumes that non-Western cultures simply do not have it in them to master modern science and technology.

As for the Oriental Jew in Israeli politics, I thought that I had made the point clearly, but again Professor Avineri seems to have avoided it. In the highly centralized Israeli political party system the acknowledged capture of local centers of power (e.g., in the development towns) by no means necessarily points the way to eventual Oriental influence in the national centers. Incidentally—a correction of fact: I did not point out that Oriental lists were never successful in winning any Knesset seats. Avineri should have known that they were successful in the first three Knessets; he is, after all, an Israeli political scientist. It is scandalous of him to suggest that my understanding of this problem is limited by my ignorance of Hebrew as indicated by the alleged fact that I cite only from English-language publications. Among the Hebrew publications from which I cited are *Divrei Haknesset, Bama'arachah,*

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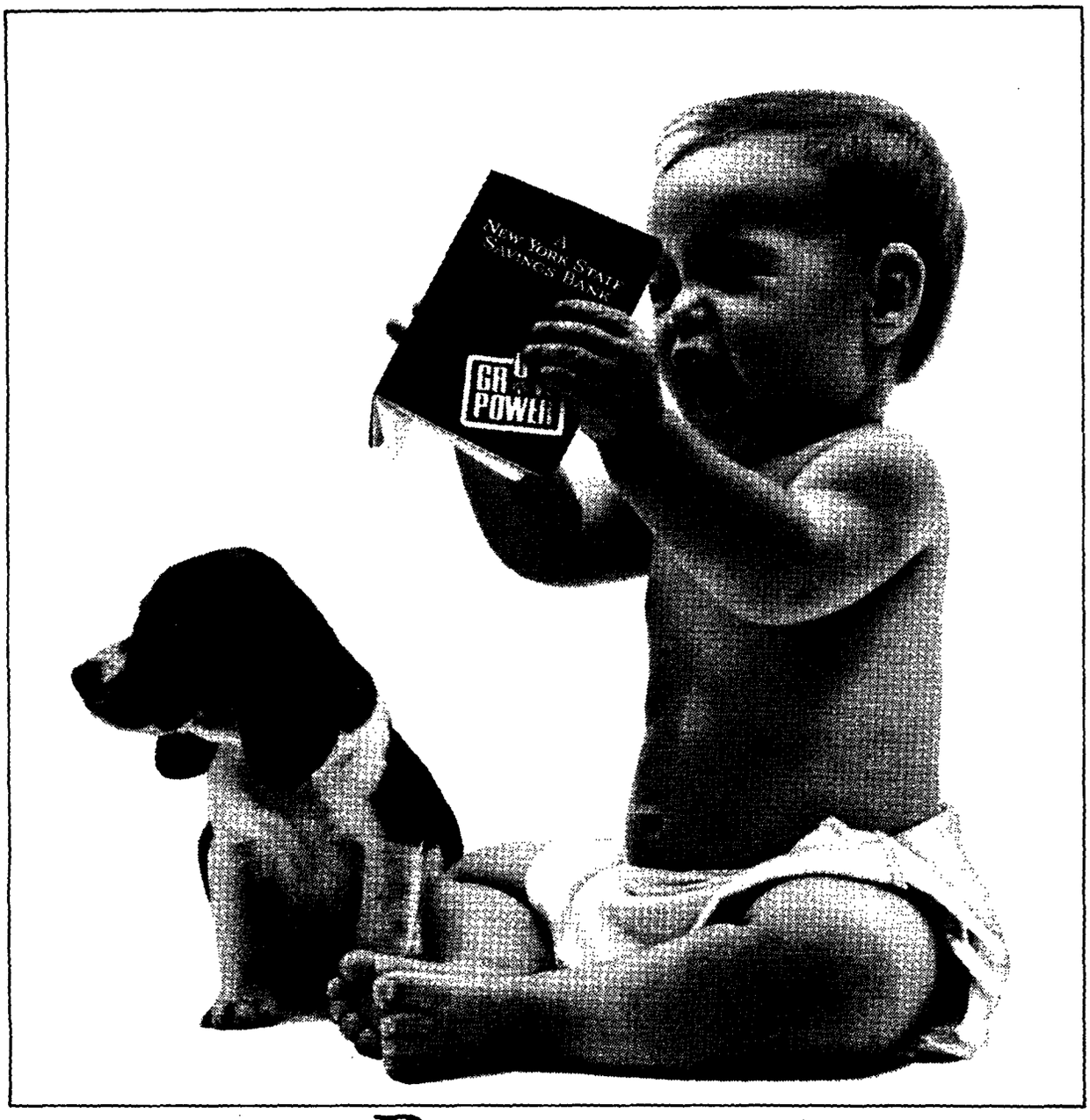

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Davar, Ammot, and the reports of the *"Emunah"* circle. I repeat my contention however that the most valuable publications in this subject have, significantly enough, appeared in English—notably those of Shumsky, Weingrod, and Zenner. Israeli sociologists . . . have been fantastically backward in getting to grips with this problem. . . .

IN THE light of all this, it must be asked whether Professor Avineri's review really can be considered a serious and substantive discussion of my contention that Israel can in no meaningful way be considered the Jewish state. Israel had its origins in an ideology aimed explicitly at negating and rejecting the Jewish identity. The realities of Israeli society, of ethnic tensions in Israel, of a growingly dangerous and spiritually crippling *Kulturkampf* between secularists and clericalists; the violent intolerance shown toward the Arab world which parallels that shown by the Arabs toward Israel—all this gives little hope of demonstrating that Israel embodies, or has the potential of embodying, the normative ethical values of Judaism. At the outset of his review Professor Avineri observes, "an impressive mass of data and facts has been assembled; historical perspectives have been traced; all the right quotations adduced" in my book. He then . . . attempts to demonstrate the very reverse of this, accusing me of slogan-mongering, failing to substantiate assertions, etc. It would surely have been more appropriate for him to try to come to grips with what he himself called the "impressive mass of data and facts" I presented. My sole point in this book was really to present that data and then ask if it could possibly relate to a *Jewish* state—basically a very simple procedure. Unlike Professor Avineri, I cannot claim to be a sophisticate. That is why, as he correctly suggests, my earlier Zionism undoubtedly was "naive." . . . It was "naive" because I assumed that the so-called Jewish state would really be a Jewish state in something more than merely the demographic sense. Equally, my anti-Zionism must now be considered, as he suggests, "naive." I am an anti-Zionist because I do not see that Israel is in a normative or inspirational sense Jewish; nor do I see any reason for assuming that it ever will be. . . .

MICHAEL SELZER

New York City

MR. AVINERI writes:

Even one who agreed completely with Michael Selzer's anti-Zionist premises would have wished for his attack on the social and cultural context of Zionism to be better informed. Equating Herzl with the *shtetl* mentality is absurd enough; reducing Herzl's theory of Zionism to references to his literary utopia *Altneuland* is as honest as trying to debunk socialism by pointing out that Cabet's or Proudhon's social utopias contain a lot of nonsense. A real confrontation with Herzlean Zionism would have to deal with his political tracts, like *Der Judenstaat,* and a real confrontation with Zionist ideology would not be able to limit itself to Herzl. Immense as Herzl's influence has been on Jewish public opinion in Europe, the real ideological underpinning of the social revolution in emerging Jewish society in Palestine (and Israel) draws far more on the writings of people like Leo Pinsker, Dov Borochov, Berl Katznelson, and others who may not be well known outside Israel, but whose writings are crucial to an understanding of the unique (and sometimes perhaps bizarre) nature of Israeli society. It is this understanding which is so lamentably missing from Selzer's book.

Few people would disagree that the *Haskala*'s views on Jewish history were sometimes simpleminded and distorted. But Selzer seems to overlook the fact that the *Haskala* itself, as well as Zionism and mass-immigration to the West, were responses to the basically intolerable circumstances in which the Jews of Eastern Europe found themselves toward the end of the 19th century. Jewish misery and Eastern European anti-Semitism were locked in a vicious circle. The existence of a sizable Jewish population in the midst of growing Eastern European nationalism was basically unviable and impossible. Immigration to the West, as well as Zionism, were two answers, on different levels, to this particular plight. If fundamentalist Zionists view only the Zionist solution as legitimate, Selzer makes the opposite error of viewing only the non-Zionist solution as legitimate. On the grounds of his pluralistic premises, Selzer should at least view both of them as equally legitimate.

Selzer tries to explain his total disregard of the capture of local Israeli politics by the Oriental ethnic vote with a reference to what he calls the highly centralized party

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structure in Israel, which makes such local shifts inconsequential. This again shows his recurring inability to grasp social dynamics. What he calls the centralism of Israeli political parties has always been based on a coalition, within each party (and especially within Mapai) of the local machine bosses; the ensuing centralization was a consequence of the rather homogeneous composition of the Israeli political elite. However, with the entry of a socially different element into more and more arenas of local politics and power, strains have begun to be clearly visible at the center, and new coalitions are already being formed within each of the parties. In these coalitions, the power of the new local Oriental bosses is becoming more and more significant. The most casual examination of changes in the composition of the *central* party machines bears this out, yet Selzer never troubled himself to look into this issue. . . .

Selzer maintains that the crucial question is, "Is Israel the Jewish state?" But in this formulation the question is as meaningless as asking "Is America the Capitalist society?" or "Is the Soviet Union the Communist state?" Since Selzer agrees in the opening chapter of his book that the connotation of "Jewish" is multi-dimensional and hence pluralistic, there is no one meaning to his question and hence the number of possible explications of the term "Jewish." In other words, the question is meaningless given Selzer's own premises. But it raises another problem: some of us in Israel believe that no one Jewish community can legislate the "Jewishness" of another Jewish community. Just as few Israelis would agree today with the fundamentalist position once aired by old-time leaders—that one cannot be Jewish unless one lives in Israel—so would very few take seriously an attempt from the outside to tell Israel how to be "Jewish." Just as the Jewishness of American Jews should be left, for better or for worse, to them, so should the Jewishness of Israel be left to the Israelis. The question is not "Is Israel the Jewish state?" but whether a person can consider himself Jewish in any meaningful sense without being concerned about Israel, whatever his criticism of or misgivings about Israel may be. It is here that Selzer's answer is so disappointing—and so basically irresponsible to his own liberal and pluralistic premises.

כ

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PEH *stands for* **PASSOVER**

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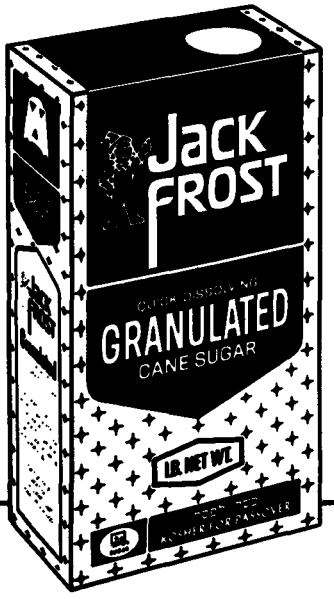

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Attempting to articulate the dilemmas faced by the liberal voter this year, COMMENTARY *herewith continues its regular column, Election '68. This department, which will run continuously until October, is intended to provide a forum for a variety of opinions on the options open to the concerned and responsible citizen.* MICHAEL HARRINGTON, *author of the present essay, is chairman of the League for Industrial Democracy. His books include* The Other America, The Accidental Century, *and the forthcoming* Toward a Democratic Left, *which Macmillan will publish later this month. We invite letters and comments from our readers on the points raised by Mr. Harrington as well as by the other contributors to this department.*

Voting the Lesser Evil

Michael Harrington

ENDING THE WAR in Vietnam must be the aim of any liberal or radical strategy for 1968.

The tragic character of the American involvement in Southeast Asia is, for me, so obvious that I will only note it rather than argue it. Our commitment to this hideous conflict threatens World War III through a military confrontation with Chinese Communism. It has already reversed many of the hopeful trends toward a Soviet-American detente and even a liquidation of the cold war. And last, but not least, it ravages an innocent land which has already undergone a generation of bloodshed. America acts as the heir of French imperialism, supports a government led by officers who fought against their own countrymen on behalf of a colonialist army, and thus continues a tactic which, for over twenty years, has driven nationalists into a Communist-led movement.

Moreover, and this is not so obvious, the American involvement in Vietnam constitutes the strongest right-wing force in our domestic political life. There will be no solution to the crisis of the cities, no response to the economic, social, and psychological outrage of racism, and no positive answer to the hysteria about "crime in the streets" as long as the war goes on. Since this is the case, any strategy which seeks to mute the issue of Vietnam in order to forward the struggle against injustice within the United States is self-defeating.

A dedicated, brilliant liberal like Leon Keyserling would challenge the above thesis. In this, he is an able spokesman for a point of view which has significant influence in the American liberal movement, particularly in its labor wing. Keyserling argues that, in terms of economic resources, America is so wealthy that it can simultaneously fight the Vietcong abroad and the slums at home. That is quite right. He also insists that the poor, both black and white, must not be required to pay a disproportionate cost of the war. That is quite right, too, and therefore doves should unite with hawks in the battle for civil rights, anti-poverty funds, and all the rest. Those opponents of the war who refuse to work on such issues with, say, the AFL-CIO leadership because of the latter's support of Johnson's Vietnam policy are not being militant. They are simply imposing the heaviest burden of a war which the middle-class peace movement has not succeeded in stopping upon the backs of people in the ghettos and the backwoods.

But where Keyserling is, to my mind, quite wrong is in thinking that there is any *political* hope to push forward with social programs as long as the commitment to Vietnam continues. The effort must be made, to be sure, but given the right-wing impact of Vietnam upon American life, it will be a holding action at best. Since 1965, the administration has de-escalated the struggle against poverty and racism every time it has escalated the attack in Southeast Asia, and the Great Society no longer survives even as a phrase. The President has not simply shifted billions of dollars from construction to destruction. He has appropriated all the intangible resources at his command —human energy, intelligence, and imagination—in support of his Vietnam policy as well.

As a result, Mr. Johnson has helped to create the conditions for what Bayard Rustin has termed "the politics of fear and frustration." The poor were promised an "unconditional" war on poverty in January 1964. The beginnings of the campaign were exceedingly modest—a reconaissance rather than a battle—but there were reasons to hope. So black America, the most dynamic, aspiring part of the other America, gave massive support to Johnson in the 1964 elections. But then, having raised up the spirits of the poor, and particularly of Negroes already in political motion, Mr. Johnson dashed them down. Out of this bitter experience, a sense of frustration swept the activists. Some turned to an angry, and even racist, militancy; others sank back into a despairing nihilism. The whites were fearful of this aroused frustration, and professed reactionaries therefore received more and more support. In 1967, they successfully mounted a savage attack upon the Aid for Dependent Children program and, in effect, passed an anti-Negro law (actually, *all* of the young receiving help under ADC were harmed—it was an anti-anti-poverty law—but the blacks among them suffered the most grievously, as usual).

In other words, the domestic political consequences of the Vietnam policy have canceled out the economic possibility of waging two vigorous wars, one tragic and one

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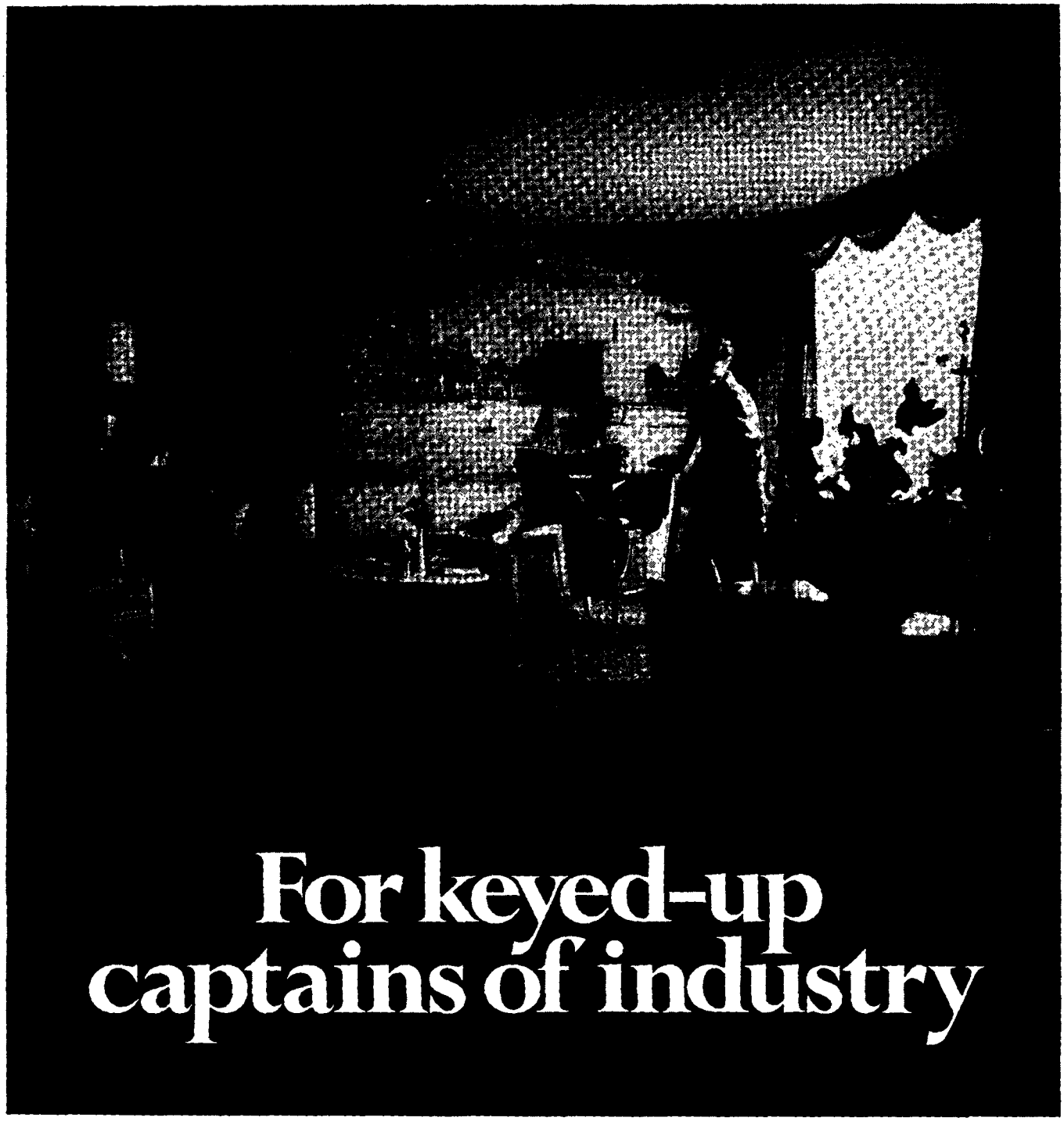

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happy, at the same time. I will certainly join with Keyserling and his co-thinkers in insisting as loudly as possible that this *should* not be so. But a political strategy has to be based on the sure knowledge that it *is* already a fact.

In this perspective, every major issue in America today is a function of the war. Those who argue, for instance, that the real debate in the coming campaign will be over "crime in the streets" and not Vietnam, fail to understand that the first issue depends on the second. When Mr. Johnson's commitment to Southeast Asia made it impossible for him to redeem his sweeping promises to the American ghetto, he lost the chance to deal with Negro frustration in a positive way. Since the President is thus unable to remove the fundamental and outrageous causes of black desperation, he has no effective answer to the white backlashers who demand the rule of the nightstick. Were it not for Vietnam, it might well not even be necessary to have the discussion over "crime in the streets," for vigorous programs would deal with basic causes: but thanks to Vietnam, Mr. Johnson finds it so difficult to answer his critics on the Right that he is apparently going to try to steal the issue from them.

In saying these things about Johnson, let me dissociate myself from some of the more hysterical anti-warriors, in part out of a sense of simple fairness, in part because of the politics of the future.

I SEE Lyndon Johnson as more tragic than malevolent. In 1964, I suspect he honestly and genuinely wanted to complete Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. I was convinced then, as now, that he did not understand the radical departures which his goals implied, but at least he was pointing to the real problems. In Washington in those days, and on the very campuses which are now most disenchanted and angry with the President, there was a sense of hope and possibility. But slowly, in tiny increments of error, through carefully phased and counter-productive escalations, Mr. Johnson led this nation into the most morally disastrous war in its history. And among the many victims of this policy were his own best intentions.

It is also politically important to maintain a sense of the complexity of the issue. If this horrible war is ended before an ultimate escalation, then the only hope for progressive social change will be a reunification of the liberal and labor forces now so bitterly divided with regard to the administration's foreign policy. There exists no political majority for democratic structural reform without the trade unionists—who represent the largest organized force for such domestic innovations—the Negroes, the liberal middle class, and others. The efforts of various New Left theorists to discover a new "proletariat," be it among the poor, the blacks, the alienated, the youth, or wherever, have all failed. Now, it is conceivable that it will even be impossible to construct the kind of coalition I describe here. But it is certain that this represents the only chance for humane transformations of America and, eventually, of America's role in the world.

When the war is over, the Council of Economic Advisors tells us in its 1968 Report, $30 billion will become available in eighteen months ($15 billion through cutbacks in Defense spending; $15 billion through the normal fiscal dividend which an expanding economy provides). How will it be spent? The Council mentions a number of possibilities, the very first among them a tax cut. And there is no question that there will be powerful conservative forces pressing for such a reactionary Keynesian intervention to stimulate the postwar economy. On the other side in such a debate will be those who will seek to use this money for direct public investments to meet vital social needs. For this latter view to prevail, the factions of the democratic Left which are now bitterly split over Vietnam will have to come together again.

For this reason, I would urge my point of view against that of Keyserling and the labor liberals in a certain way. I believe that they are quite wrong in failing to understand that, so long as Vietnam continues, America will move to the Right on all fundamental social questions. One fights the trends,

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and there might even be a victory here and there, but the political economics of 1968 are such that the administration cannot, and will not, supply the resources both for the wrong war there and for the right one here. And this fact, more than any speech by Rap Brown, will incite some black Americans to desperation and white Americans to fear. But in thus insisting that Vietnam is central to every major question in the campaign, I want to act so as to promote cooperation now on immediate social issues and between doves and hawks, and thus lay the basis for the coalition of the future.

So my criterion for judging political strategies this year is this: how will a candidate, or a tactic, help to end the war in Vietnam? And I take this position not simply because of what that conflict is doing in Asia and in the world but also because of what it is doing in America.

Given this standpoint, the various "resistance" strategies are not an effective means of bringing the war to a close, though they may well be transcendental obligations which bind the individual conscience. For the most part, resistance is an attempt to give political meaning to the moral anguish of young people faced with the impossible choices of serving in a war they consider to be profoundly unjust, going to jail, or fleeing to Canada. Were I in the age group, I would myself refuse to serve and seek classification as a conscientious objector, going to jail if need be. And, if the public prosecutor will once again take note, I hereby counsel young people—and everyone, for that matter—to follow their conscience on the issue of the war (the reasoning behind my attitude is spelled out in the March-April *Dissent*).

But the fact remains that, however morally necessary some form of resistance may be to the individual, it is not an effective political tactic against the war. It is largely confined to the middle class, particularly when it becomes a matter of risking jail, and to a tiny minority at that. Moreover, when resistance takes the form of *épater les bourgeois*, of subordinating the struggle to end the war to the battle for pot or groovy clothes, it becomes a contemptible act of petty bourgeois self-indulgence in which "doing one's thing" is more important than the agony of the Vietnamese. Finally, when the resisters do not simply witness their own convictions but try to stop others in the exercise of their democratic rights, they are not simply anti-libertarian but running the risk of provoking a McCarthyite repression.

If I were Lyndon Johnson, I would hope that the "Yippies" have a marvelous campy happening at the Chicago Democratic convention and identify the anti-war cause with the East Village and Haight-Ashbury. In American political terms that would constitute the most effective pro-war demonstration imaginable.

Then there are the various third-party strategies on the Left, the most serious among them being the Peace and Freedom party which has qualified for the ballot in California. These efforts will, I believe, lead many committed and excellent people to a political dead-end. For such groups have taken a principled, programmatic position in favor of being a marginal minority —and that is not going to end the war or prepare for the peace.

In California, for instance, prominent Peace and Freedom leaders have made it clear that unmasking Eugene McCarthy is one of their main functions. And indeed, the tactic of persuading liberals and radicals to switch their registration out of the Democratic party will make Mr. Johnson's task all the easier during the primary. But this is not a simple aberration from tactical judgment. It flows from a long-range strategy which is current among many New Leftists. It is worth taking seriously, not because it has any serious political substance, but because it speaks to the emotions of many young people who must eventually be won to a democratic-Left coalition.

The basic premise underlying the Peace and Freedom tactic is that there is a chasm which separates radicalism and liberalism. Thus in San Francisco last year, the Vietnam referendum had to be phrased in terms of immediate withdrawal; dividing the anti-war camp in this way, it allowed the President a gratuitous victory. Thus, too, I heard a

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young militant at a Berkeley meeting last October (it was in violation of an anti-libertarian injunction) denounce the main enemy of the peace movement: Senator Robert F. Kennedy. And thus, too, they argue that Eugene McCarthy is really pro-war.

Here is how Carl Oglesby, writing in the February *Ramparts*, defined "the historic mission of American liberalism": "bridge all the old contradictions and close the wounds of America." Now there is no question that liberalism, which is non-revolutionary and proposes reform within the system, can be used to prop up the status quo. There are indeed corporate liberals who, having learned from Marie Antoinette, are happy to "social engineer" some bread for the masses so that the elite can keep its cake. But there are also liberals whose main concern is reform, not the system reform is supposed to ameliorate. These are the ones who stood firm against McCarthyism and defended the rights of Communists, who struggled for the social changes which allowed so many of the New Leftists to go to college, who risked their lives in the civil-rights struggle, and so on.

But in the Peace and Freedom view, this contradictory, changing phenomenon of mass liberalism has been reduced to the worst aspects of its most conservative wing. And in one stroke, the organized American working-class (which stands for a domestic liberal program), most of the Negroes, most of the middle class, are placed beyond the pale. There is no understanding that America will move to the Left only when these people, acting out of what is best in their liberal commitment and in response to overwhelming events, turn in a radical direction. Instead, there is an emotionally satisfying proclamation of radical righteousness which appeals primarily to college students and graduates.

So I would reject the Peace and Freedom approach on two grounds. First, its long-range strategic orientation is a blueprint for irrelevance and contains elements of elitist contempt for the democratic potential of rank-and-file Americans. And second, in terms of the overriding necessity to organize for ending the war in Vietnam, this tactic would reduce the anti-war movement to a moralistic fringe.

Therefore, in this election it seems to me that political efforts to stop the war must be directed toward one of the two major parties—or both.

BETWEEN NOW AND the Democratic convention there is no question in my mind that Senator Eugene McCarthy's campaign provides the most effective way of challenging administration policy. McCarthy has a position in favor of negotiations which might both win the support of the majority of the American people and actually provide the basis for ending the Vietnamese agony. His efforts are concentrated in the party which already commands the allegiance of those who are concerned both about Vietnam and about social change in America.

I certainly wish McCarthy's record on several domestic issues were better than it is, but the fact that he provides a rallying point for effective anti-war sentiment is a much greater contribution to the cause of domestic transformation than a perfect voting record in the past. For Vietnam, once again, is the determinant of our domestic possibilities as well as a hideous event in its own right. The McCarthy style has been much criticized, and I am not sure on that count who is right: perhaps an understated approach may produce more lasting eloquence than the flamboyant psychodramas which some of McCarthy's critics on the Left demand. But in any case, Eugene McCarthy is the only Democrat who, at this writing, has taken a courageous and audacious stand against the war in the form of a direct challenge to the President. That makes up my mind.

McCarthy, I assume, will not win the nomination. But if his movement can command significant, committed minority support within the Democratic party, it will provide the most effective way of registering anti-war protest. Lyndon Johnson will hear about such strength; so will the Republican party.

But the Democratic party will nominate Johnson. What then? At that point it will be necessary to

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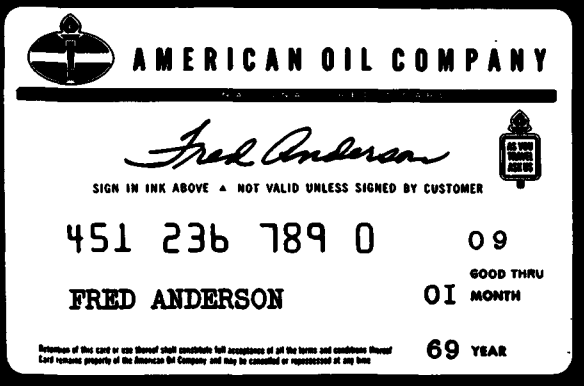

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follow a rigorous lesser-evilism which, in most cases, will point to an emotionally unsatisfying, and even repugnant, vote. For the claims of the suffering people of Vietnam and the threat of World War III posed by a continuation of that war are so urgent that gestures which are merely moral become immoral.

In a contest between Lyndon Johnson and a Republican super-hawk (Ronald Reagan certainly, Richard Nixon possibly), I would vote for Johnson on lesser-evil grounds. It has been somewhat fashionable in recent years for opponents of the war to apologize for voting for Johnson in 1964 because he turned out to be a Goldwaterite on Vietnam. I make no such apology. Johnson was, and is, a lesser evil than Goldwater on Vietnam and, in comparison, a positive good when it comes to domestic questions. For all of my anger at Johnson's violation of his campaign promises of '64, for all my suspicions that he was planning escalation even as he talked peace, he has not yet turned over the conduct of the war to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Perhaps he will do so in the future. But Goldwater, I am convinced, would have done it four years ago. And Reagan would do it next January, and perhaps Nixon would. And since I believe the Joint Chiefs are, whether wittingly or not, objectively advocates of World War III, I would vote for Johnson as against a super-hawk.

If a Republican dove ran against Johnson, or even a somewhat dovish Republican who was trying to take advantage of the popular anti-war sentiment, I would, with great reluctance, vote for him. I say this even though I am convinced that the election of any Republican, no matter how liberal, would further conservatize the Congress. For the Republican party is certainly going to be to the Right of any of its doves, and the coattail effect which always takes place in Presidential years would be reactionary in this case. But, once again, four more years of Johnson's war policy would have an even more Rightward effect than would be produced by a dove Republican with a conservative Congress.

MOREOVER, I am convinced that one of the main reasons that Johnson does not really seek negotiations (I believe that every one of his peace offers has announced American willingness to accept a Vietcong surrender in one form or another) is that once they are concluded he will have to explain why he spent all that blood and treasure on the venture. And since a political settlement of the war will inevitably involve concessions to the National Liberation Front, Johnson cannot find a rationale which would justify the high human and material price of his policy. Therefore, I believe that a Republican dove, even a somewhat opportunistic one, would be able to end the war where Johnson could not.

But if the choice is between the President and a merely hawkish, but not super-hawkish, Nixon, I would vote for Johnson on the grounds that he is clearly to be preferred on domestic questions. At the same time, I would make it quite clear that this eventuality strikes me as a failure of the democratic system—that at a moment of high peril and profound issues there is no significant choice with regard to the fate of the nation and of the world as it is posed in Vietnam. For there would be no serious way to vote effectively for an end to the war.

FINALLY, a few general comments: I assume that the foregoing is as depressing to read as it was to write. Yet I think it important, even in these rather dark days, not to jump to apocalyptic conclusions as some on the Left have done. There are, for instance, those who think that democracy has broken down because they have not been able to persuade a majority to agree with an anti-war position. Now, this may well show that the democratic majority is capable of being tragically wrong under certain conditions. But it does not prove that there are no longer ways of changing men's minds and creating new majorities. Therefore one must insist, and particularly to the young in these disenchanting times, that the struggle is going to be a long one, that it might conceivably even be lost, but that it is by no means over yet.

So if a certain conservatism of American social structure and political habit results, in one way or another, in an endorsement of this terrible war, it is hardly the moment to flee into revolutionary fantasies in which the poor misguided people are really radical if only they'd listen to the spokesmen of their true interest. Neither is it a time for withdrawal, either into a hippie ghetto or into a suburban inwardness.

There are congressional and senatorial elections of enormous moment on the ballot and, should the Wallace candidacy succeed in winning a balance of power for segregation, it would be of great importance. Even if the most obscene consequences of the Wallace tactic do not come to pass, there is still the battle over social legislation. Therefore, it seems to me that, no matter what an opponent of the war might decide to do on the Presidential line, it is of the utmost urgency to participate in all of the other campaigns where there are significant choices. For eventually, once this war is over, there must be a new majority in America and it will number in its ranks those who now differ on the war. That is why it is so important to seek to end the war in such a way as to make it possible to win the peace: that there will never be another Vietnam; that there will be a new America.

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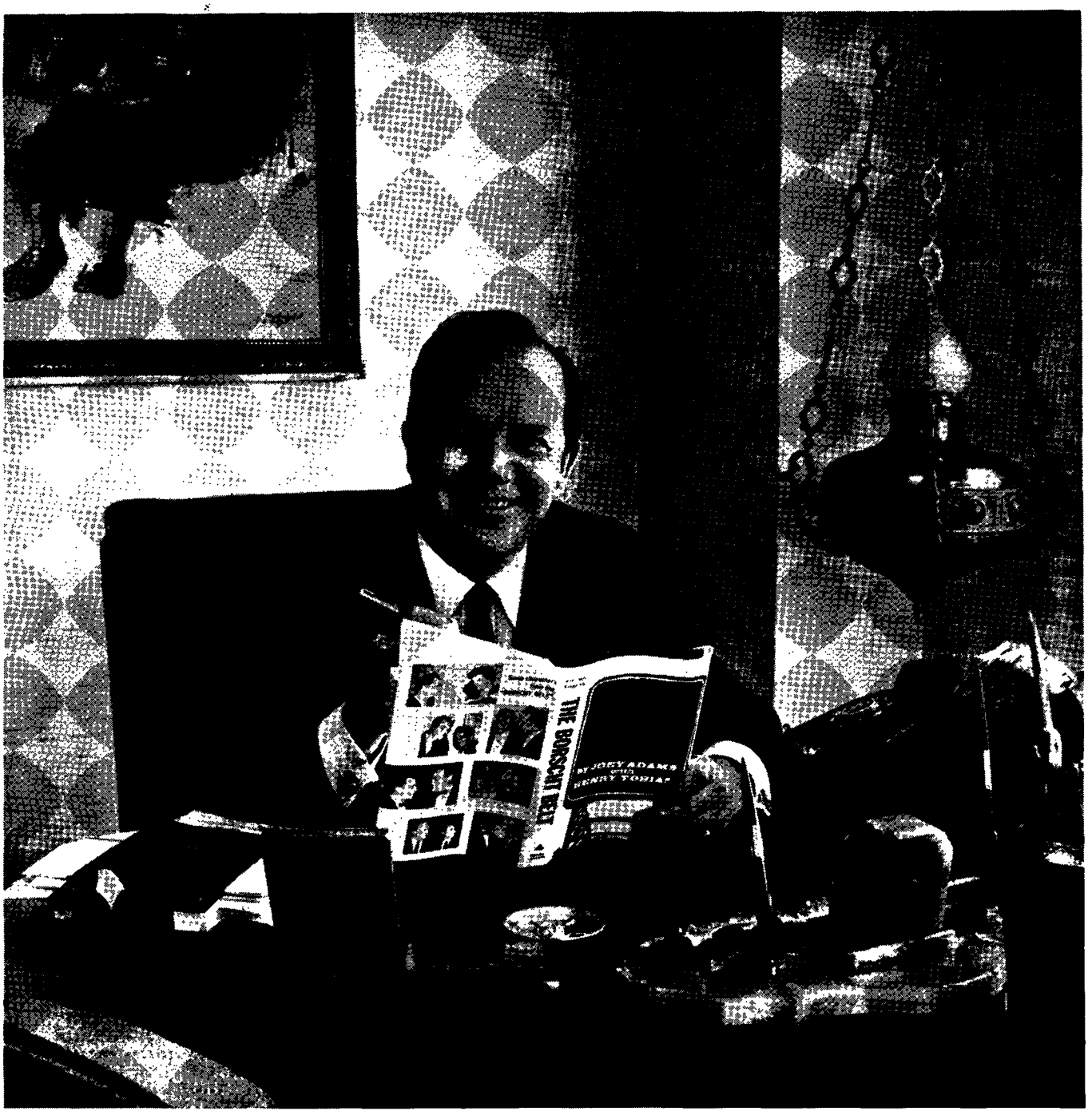

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The Battle of the Pentagon

Norman Mailer

I: A Search for the Steps

THE CADRES OF that citizen's army which marched on the Pentagon on October 21, 1967 were composed of a coalition which could never have come together ten years before, and were in fact held in a kind of suspension on this occasion only through what is considered—by reasonable consensus—the extraordinary abilities of the chairman of the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, David Dellinger, editor of the anarchist-pacifist magazine *Liberation*. Yet his previous experience for such mobilizations was surprisingly not very great. Assistant to A. J. Muste for years, he inherited some of the Reverend's prestige when Muste died in February 1967 while working on preparations for the peace parade in New York that spring. Consequently, Dellinger organized the April parade, rally, and assembly in the plaza of the UN of a host of peace groups whose number was probably so high as a quarter of a million people. By New York *Times* estimate, this support proved twice as large as a massive counter-rally in May of patriotic groups who chose to support the war in Vietnam. But when its size and success proved to have an absolutely discernible lack of effect on foreign policy, and the war in Vietnam escalated again, an open conference was held in Washington at the Hawthorne School on May 20 and 21 of the National Mobilization Committee. With the exception of Dellinger who was then in Hanoi, some of the figures attending were the Reverend James Bevel, one of the leading organizers of the April March and aide to Martin Luther King; Professor Sidney Peck, a co-chairman of the Mobilization and chairman of the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council; Professor Robert Greenblatt, national coordinator of the Mobilization and an early founder of the campus anti-war teach-ins; and representatives from numerous moderate peace groups, SNCC, SDS, socialist splinter parties, and a couple of Communists. On the rising enthusiasm which followed the New York March it was contemplated by many at this meeting to have what would probably be the greatest rally in American history. In Washington in the fall, they would attempt to gather a million people. That was the magnetic number originally discussed, and the key slogan drafted at this May meeting was Support Our Boys in Vietnam—Bring Them Home Now. The date was even picked: October 21; it seemed the best conjunction of a number of factors —the weather would still be good, there would be ample time after Labor Day to get out word of the action, and yet not so late that exam schedules would keep college students away. Already there was vague talk of civil disobedience.

It seems obvious that the idea for such a massive rally probably derived from the success and the organizational mechanics of the April March rather than in response to the lack of political effect that March had had on the Johnson administration—indeed there was hardly time to measure the effect. It is possible that if the April March had produced a noticeable de-escalation of the war, future peace rallies might have been more conciliatory—as likely, they would have turned militant. In fact, it probably made no real difference. Just as an intensive study of foreign policy usually succeeds in depressing any lover of democratic process because foreign policy is encapsulated and therefore tends to be self-governing, so political life on the American Left tends to have an inner development which bears little relation to subtle changes in the external political context. Severed from the trade-union movement by right-wing labor leaders' raids in the early years of the cold war, the American Left—until the rise of the Negro civil-rights movements—was in this interregnum, a profoundly middle-class phenomenon filled with bitter family rifts, great propriety, academic foundations, intellectual rigidity which reacted to cataclysmic political changes outside the way a patient reacts to an operation (misery, nausea, and convalescence) and much skill in internecine organizational war (not unlike the scheming which goes into the rewriting of a will). There was—as in many middle-class families—a middle-class excess of compulsive orality, an extraordinary love of debate in meetings; just as the family lends itself to a vigorous if sterile set of speeches by its members in which—if the family is sufficiently unhappy—each can have the floor for

NORMAN MAILER is the eminent American writer. His books include *The Naked and the Dead, The Deer Park, Advertisements for Myself*, and, most recently, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* The present essay will appear, in somewhat different form, as part of Mr. Mailer's forthcoming book, *Armies of the Night*, which New American Library will publish in May.

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ten minutes to describe his own views, resentments, private sufferings, and sacrifices, so too for left-wing life during the interregnum. The 50's were a profoundly unhappy period for the left wing; in the 60's with Cuba, Civil Rights, Kennedy, Berkeley, the Great Society, and the war in Vietnam, the new blood of Negro movements and youth movements brought life back to the Left, but only for a period. By 1965 the Negroes were disaffected, even profoundly bored with left-wing rhetoric which seemed to match little in their own imperatives, the youth were obviously contemptuous of the Old Left. By the time of the April March, the rifts were profound between the races and the generations. But the huge and unexpected success of the April March, its unanticipated size—no one had secretly believed they would attract a quarter of a million people—had given new hope to the Old Left, which, being thus profoundly middle class (and hence committed to the logic-of-the-next-step), had entered, infiltrated, invigorated, and doubtless inspired many middle-class peace movements. There are political alliances which are attractive, just as there are others which are dutiful. By the rudest existential measure, attractive alliances are not unsexy, dutiful alliances are deadening. Any coalition of the New Left and the Old, or the New Left and the Black Militants was dutiful, and sometimes near to unendurable. On the other hand, coalition between the New Left and the hippies, or the Old Left and the middle-class liberals in the peace movements was attractive, for ideas developed from such meetings, hopes, enthusiasms, even agreeable surprises—which last is next to manna in the life of an Old Leftist since the orthodoxy of his mind leaves not much room for surprise. Perhaps the deepest and most natural of these new alignments was between the peace liberal and the peace or Old Leftist; each excited the other—the liberal, bringing along his mass movement, was the equivalent of a wealthy heiress to a poor Old Leftist; the Old Leftist was a virile but most conventional (and manageable) principle of adventure in the somewhat deodorized orchards of comfortable middle-class liberal life. So even a year or more before the October March of 1967 in Washington was discussed, the future schisms were shaping: the Black militants were moving off by themselves, the Old Left was investing itself deep in the liberal purlieus of mass peace, and the New Left and the hippies were coming upon the opening intimations of a new style of revolution—revolution by theater and without a script.

UNDER THESE uneasy conditions, one may wonder at the practical judgment of men who meet in Washington in May to call for a rally in October which will assemble a million people. It is not really as unsound psychologically as it seems, any more than it is mentally unsound for the head of a middle-class family to announce on his best day of the year, "Honey, I'm going to make a million yet!" Without one such fierce element of the fantastic, middle-class life is insupportable. The same may be said of the old left-wing life. Without the ability to believe for a magical minute at a meeting that a million people will rally, without such inner intimations of glory (from the speech—not the fulfillment of the event), life on the left wing would be a drab parade of mimeograph machines, meetings, economic sacrifices, organizational tension, and that auditory deadening of the senses produced by left-wing rhetoric. The Old Left lived for their imagination; their imagination was founded on the apocalyptic moment—not for nothing had Lenin pointed out that there were ten years which passed like an uneventful day, but there was also the revolutionary day which was like ten years.

So plans for a rally to bring a million men and women to Washington were discussed, and the near to absolute impossibility of the project was cushioned by a growing sense of apocalypse in American life. If everything was altering at an unpredictable rate, so might a mass outcry against the war build over the months of the summer.

But the summer of 1967 was not favorable for the building of such a vast response. The Arab-Israeli war in June divided the Old Left one more time. Many of the Old Left and many members of the liberal peace groups were Jewish, and enraptured with Israel; more of the Old Left, also Jewish, remained true to the rigorous coils of certain more or less Trotskyist and Communist positions, which left them therefore beached as apologists for Nasser (a miserable position since he had bragged of the future burning of Israelis). Worse, the Black militants were almost entirely for the Arabs. The New Left in its turn was therefore seriously divided. Unity had obviously not been encouraged.

Then came Negro riots near a scale of war in the ghettos of at least a dozen major American cities. If the Old Left was thrilled at the militancy, it was also disturbed at the brutality. Plekhanov, teacher of Lenin, first editor of *Iskra*, architect of revolution on the Russian model, was appalled by the actual presence of the Soviet soldier at his doorstep—so was the Old Left by the criminally suggestive cool of Black Power, by the snipers, the Molotov cocktails thrown from the rooftops. On the other hand, the New Left was impressed. Young, college-bred, middle-class, they felt the militancy of the Blacks as a reproof to their own secure relatively unthreatened mass demonstrations. The center of pressure to mount an exciting weekend in Washington began then to pass from the Old Left and the peace groups to the New Left and the youth groups. Where the Arab-Israeli war

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had divided liberals from Old Leftists, and the Negro riots had quenched some of the militancy of the peace group liberals, the New Left was in a state of stimulation, and the hippies, dedicated to every turn of the unexpected, were obviously—as always—ready for anything.

FOR MANY OF these reasons, therefore, the projected March on Washington was in the doldrums. Money to support it was hardly dribbling in, Dellinger had been on visits to Hanoi and thus otherwise occupied; enthusiasm among peace groups was not high. At this point Dellinger called in Jerry Rubin from Berkeley to be Project Director for the March. Rubin had enormous stature among youth groups and under-thirties, second perhaps only to Mario Savio. Rubin had organized Vietnam Day at Berkeley (the first mass protest of the war), had led marches in Berkeley designed to block troop trains, then massive marches in Oakland, had served a thirty-day jail sentence, and had appeared at a House Un-American Activities Committee hearing in an American Revolutionary War uniform. He had also run for Mayor of Berkeley on a platform opposing war and supporting Black Power and the legalization of pot, collecting in the process 7,385 ballots or 22 per cent of the vote.

It was a way of announcing to the various groups in the National Mobilization that the October event in Washington was now striking out into that no-man's-land between organized acceptable dissent and incalculable acts of revolution. To call on Rubin was in effect to call upon the most militant, unpredictable, creative—therefore dangerous—hippie-oriented leader available on the New Left. It is to Dellinger's credit that he most probably did not do this to save the March, since there was no doubt that doldrums or no, a peaceful demonstration of large proportions could always have been gotten together; the invitation to Rubin was rather an expression of Dellinger's faith in the possibility—a most difficult possibility which only his own untested gifts as a conciliator could have enabled him to envisage—of a combined conventional mass protest and civil disobedience which might help to unify the scattered elements of the peace movement. When Rubin arrived in New York, Dellinger's project was at the time conceived as follows: there would be an assembly, then a march past the White House down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol, where demonstrators who wished would enter Congress and there commit acts of civil disobedience. There was even talk of investing Congress and taking it over, establishing, if only for an hour, a People's Congress. But Rubin did not like the revolutionary aesthetics of this plan—he argued with Dellinger that the proposal, while on the surface most attractive, was nonetheless a move at once too radical and too soft. It was too radical because the Capitol could not successfully be occupied, and the alternate plan—for demonstrators to petition their congressmen—was pathetically soft.

In Rubin's opinion, Congress was not a source but a servant of the real power in America. So Congress did not inspire the thought of real confrontations between real enemies, it did stir the imagination to awe and dread and admiration. In fact, for good or ill, Congress was an agreeable symbol to the vast majority of Americans. Rubin had therefore brought another idea. On the West Coast they were talking of a march on the Pentagon which would encircle it, invest it, disrupt it, and conceivably paralyze its actions for a few days. Such a move would have symbolic meaning in America and around the world for the Pentagon was the symbol of the American military, and so was hated wherever U.S. forces were resented or despised at home or abroad.

Discussions ensued. It was later to be a subject of much amusement, and an interesting sidelight into the revolutionary differences between the visionary West and the practical East that the idea of invading the Pentagon began in California, yet the knowledge was obliged to come from New York that the Pentagon was not even in Washington, D.C., but Virginia, and the bridge or bridges across the Potomac would be therefore the place where police could stop the demonstrators with no difficulty at all.

A visionary may however always defeat a practical suggestion, for he absorbs any necessary kernel of the detailed from the aura of the other debater: Splendid, said Rubin, if the police should halt the March to the Pentagon on the bridge, the demonstrators could turn back and create massive disruption in the Capitol!

A FEW DAYS later, about the middle of August, Rubin, Robert Greenblatt, Coordinator of the Mobilization, and Fred Halstead of the Socialist Workers party (whose view would be not unrepresentative of the moderate peace groups) went out to the Pentagon to study its geography and suitability for a march, a rally, and the projected civil disobedience. Their report to a meeting of the Administrative Committee of the National Mobilization was not unfavorable and the Committee approved the shift from the Capitol to the Pentagon.

A number of Committee members were to walk through the Pentagon in the following weeks. They were to have the opportunity then to study a most bewildering opponent, for the strength of the Pentagon is subtle. It is not even a building one needs a pass to enter, and on an average working day no guards are visible. Nor is there any easily identifiable objective within the building. Long, exceptionally monotonous corridors with

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doors to evenly spaced small offices off them lead into other equally undistinguished halls. Of course the Administration entrance faces north onto a triangular piece of lawn called The Mall and back of it are the offices of some of the most important men in America, the Secretary of Defense, the Chiefs of Staff. If the halls on four of the five floors of the Administration wall are lined with paintings related in the main to military and naval matters (of the sort which could have been all-but-accepted for a *Saturday Evening Post* cover during World War II) and if the offices are larger here, and have reception rooms and carpet, if in these Administration corridors the walls are painted a modestly bright yellow, and there are even short stretches of wall with walnut paneling, still by no measure can anyone claim that the taxpayer's money is being wasted for extravagant interior decoration in the Pentagon.

At the other end of the building is a gloomy ill-lit chamber half the size of the Port Authority Bus Terminal in New York and it serves as a sort of roofed-over plaza. It is the shopping center for the Pentagon. A vast cafeteria is off this immense gallery, and shops of every variety, stairways to buses and taxis, airplane reservation desks, men and women's clothing shops, a Brentano's book store, gift shops—doubtless there is a souvenir shop. This is the only center of interest. Each of the five walls of the Pentagon is probably as long as the Louvre, so it is doubtful if there was ever another building in the world so huge in ground plan and so without variation. It would therefore be one thing to attack the Pentagon—it would be another to immobilize it. What could one do inside?—there were no redoubts to take unless the shopping center and cafeteria could qualify as targets, or perhaps the office of the Secretary of Defense at the other end of the building. In fact, it hardly mattered. Regardless of how many military conversations might be bandied about the possibility of occupying the Pentagon for a few hours or a few days, it must have been secretly evident to the Committee members (each to himself) that a mass march to the Pentagon announced in advance was not going to be able to enter the building in any conclusive fashion. The approaches by road were too few, the doors in each wall were also too few and too small, and the five concentric rings of the building with their lateral corridors, and corridors on axes (like a spider web), and sum of five floors on top of one another made up a total of somewhere between a hundred and fifty and two hundred corridors varying in length from two hundred to perhaps a thousand feet long, or somewhere near to twenty miles of passageway. If twenty thousand people worked in the offices, cubby holes, and warrens off those indistinguishable corridors, twice that number of demonstrators might be needed to paralyze the entire building. For the Pentagon, architecturally, was as undifferentiated as a jelly fish or a cluster of barnacles. One could chip away at any part of the interior without locating a nervous center.

IT WAS NONETHELESS an historic moment when these reconnoitering vanguards of the Mobilization Committee went into the Pentagon to study its vulnerability to attack, historic not for the magnitude of the events which were to derive from this visit, but historic as a paradigm of the disproportions and contradictions of the 20th century itself. Nineteenth-century generals would not have been permitted to explore the fortress they would attack, but they would have known its storehouse when they took it. Now recapitulate the problem at the Pentagon: an enormous office building in the shape of a fortress housed the military center of the most powerful nation on earth, yet there was no need for guards—the proliferation of the building itself was its own defense: assassination of any high official in the edifice could serve only to augment the power of the Pentagon; vulnerable to sabotage, that also could work only for the fortification of its interest. High church of the corporation, the Pentagon spoke exclusively of mass man and his civilization; every aspect of the building was anonymous, monotonous, massive, interchangeable.

For this committee of revolutionary explorers, the strangeness of their situation must have been comparable to a reconnaissance of the moon. They could enter the Pentagon without difficulty, walk wherever they pleased—although not without attracting attention quite soon, for if most of them looked like responsible executives and experts, Rubin's hair was brushed out like a Black Militant's in five inches every direction from his head; they could nonetheless explore their target, debate their approach (even debate aloud if need be in these corridors filled as much with moving people as a busy subway station), they could even if they had wished probably have paid a call on the Secretary of Defense to inform him of their project, yet it was impossible to locate the symbolic loins of the building—paradigm of the modern world indeed, they could explore every inch of their foe and know nothing about him; the 20th century was in the process of removing the last of man's power from his senses in order to store power in piled banks of coded knowledge. The essence of coded knowledge was that it could be made available to all because only a few had the code to comprehend it.

Nonetheless, they had many discussions as to which wall of the Pentagon to approach on the day. The west wall adjacent to Washington Boulevard and the helicopter pad, had too small an entrance, the southeast wall was similarly undistinguished, and overprotected by a formidable spa-

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ghetti of superhighways and cloverleafs, the river entrance on the east was militarily impossible since a narrow ramp here crossed over Jefferson Davis highway into the building—as well try to lead ten thousand men into a castle by a drawbridge. Of the five walls, two then were left: the southwest wall by the South Parking Area, and the Administrative entrance on the north wall.

Early sentiment was for entering by way of the South Parking Area which was close to the Pentagon, indeed confronted it from not fifty yards away. Here the entrances were numerous, the approaches broad, and the building most difficult to defend, for not two hundred feet behind the doors was the shopping center and the cafeteria, where a host of passageways debouched. The shopping center, although at one end of the Pentagon, was the nearest equivalent to a major crossroads. If they succeeded in reaching its great open floor, they could strike out in any number of directions, indeed in all directions—there would be no single narrow corridor to stop them.

On the other hand, the South Parking had serious disadvantages. The demonstrators would have to march half around the Pentagon to reach it, and such a long move might be easy to harass or delay; also, the southwest face of the Pentagon was the least inspiring—it looked like what it was, a loading platform, an open maw for the tons of food and supplies which came in every day, the mountains of garbage which went out. To attack here was to lose some of one's symbolic momentum—a consideration which might be comic or unpleasant in a shooting war, but in a symbolic war was not necessarily comic at all. There was something absurd in throwing oneself upon the Pentagon in order to capture the cafeteria and the shopping center. Besides, if it would be easy to strike out in all directions from the floor of this enormous gallery, so would ambush upon them be equally available—troops could come from half-a-hundred entrances; the projected battle might therefore be too rapid, and pinch off any possibility of a massive sit-in for at least forty-eight hours.

So the north wall with its Administrative entrance was eventually chosen. It was the main approach to the Pentagon, and the most attractive. Access roads curved up from Jefferson Davis Highway and Washington Boulevard to the large square of asphalt in front of the entrance steps and the Egyptian columns. Below was another flight of steps which led to two ramps descending to the Mall. An army could meet on that grassy area for a rally, then move forward for acts of civil disobedience and/or disruption with a full view of the edifice.

Back in New York, Steering Committee meetings now began to be held; every two weeks, then every week, the Administrative Committee would get together to make basic decisions. They would meet in apartments, or members' houses, or in rented halls, or at the Free School in New York. Representatives from Women Strike for Peace, the New York Parade Committee, the Chicago Peace Council, the Student Mobilization Committee, the Ohio Area Peace Action Council, and pacifists, veterans' groups, Communists, Trotskyists, returned volunteers from the Peace Corps in Vietnam were present. The difficulties of coalition, always present, were now agitated. The more liberal, which is to say the less radical, peace groups were intimidated by the specter of a large unruly civil disobedience, yet if pushed by such fears in the direction of not collaborating with the March on the Pentagon, they faced the other side of the dilemma—their refusal would split the peace movement. So enormous pressure was never put entirely upon Dellinger to settle for a massive peace rally which would forego civil disobedience, and he was able to draft a plan: The demonstration would be two-pronged—a mass march and rally would be followed by acts of civil disobedience for those who wished to engage in them. It was obvious that much time and much energy must have been spent by Dellinger in assuring the gentler and more prosperous peace groups that the civil disobedience would almost certainly be "mild," and they would be protected from unwilling involvement in the civil disobedience. Therefore, in designing this two-pronged action, certain contradictions were in-built.

Yet Dellinger had no desire to take such a large action without including the peace groups. From beginning to end, Dellinger envisaged the struggle against the war as a mass movement—how else to impress the power elite in Washington if not with a dedicated mass? The power elite knew better than anyone how difficult it was to rouse Americans to acts of dedication by now—hence, envisaging a mass movement, Dellinger was obliged from his own point of view to have the peace groups. Besides, one could not avoid the inevitable recognition that the major source of funds would be precisely these same moderate peace groups. The demonstration was eventually to cost sixty-five thousand dollars, the money to go in rent for offices in New York and Washington, for ads, for rented sound equipment, costs of telephone (huge), mailings, travel, buttons, even the modest expense of staff salaries—perhaps ten people working for fifty dollars a week. In addition, the National Mobilization was in debt as much as fifteen thousand dollars from the costs of the April March. So Dellinger could never afford to dispense—even if he had wished to—with the potential financial support of the more middle-class peace groups.

Viewing these matters from without, one could of

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course ask why an organizer would be interested in the more militant aspect of the demonstration when it was obvious the forces who wanted the more active varieties of civil disobedience, like outright disruption, although a minority in number, would create most of his problems, assure him a hostile press, exhaust huge funds of time and energy in placating his right wing, probably compromise him hopelessly in middle positions, and finally remain even hostile and uncoordinated to the National Mobilization Committee. Avoiding any certainty as to his private reasons, speculations are possible on the natural desire of a middle-aged revolutionary to remain in contact with the youth groups, as well as Dellinger's own natural militancy. Not by nature, or by his own history, a conciliator or compromiser, he had been involved for years in small but not uncourageous actions of civil disobedience. It is possible he would have been even more militant if not for his trips to Hanoi which had left him with the conviction that ending the war had first priority in America, and unity was thus the obligatory strategy. This last conviction could lead one to nothing but mass movements, if not for the fact that there were hard, objective, practical reasons for quitting passive protest and entering active civil disobedience, for taking on the slogan: "From dissent to resistance." The fragmented condition of the Left after the summer of 1967 was certain to hold down the number of participants. Yet, another mass protest against the war would be meaningless unless many times the size of previous efforts; the peace movement, if not growing, would become a predictable figure in the tapestry, to be discounted by the power elite rather than respected. A protest movement which does not grow loses power every day, since protest movements depend upon the interest they arouse in the mass media. But the mass media is interested only in processes which are expanding dramatically or collapsing. Active civil disobedience was therefore essential to give glamor and publicity to the demonstration —a page one story for Washington must instead become a page one story for the world. Then, the ante would be up, and the results unpredictable— the peace movement would seem far from subsiding into the tapestry.

Besides, Negro civil rights had prospered (until the beginning of the war in Vietnam) by the existence of their most militant groups. The value of the Black Muslims to Martin Luther King must have been considerable—he did not even have to say to the ADA, "If not me, it may be them." In contrast white radical movements had invariably made their alliances with white liberal movements, they lacked the threatening, discomposing cutting edge of an ultra-left movement which was potentially violent. It had become commonplace to remark that young people would not travel to just another march and rally. Civil disobedience therefore was vital to the advertisement of the March, as vital to the needs of the Mobilization Committee as money, and masses of demonstrators.

ON AUGUST 28 at the Overseas Press Club in New York, a press conference was held to announce the March and its intention to close down the Pentagon on Saturday, October 21, by blocking entrances and doorways. The effort would be continued through Sunday, and if possible through Monday. At the press conference table sat Monsignor Rice of Pittsburgh; Father Hayes of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship; Gary Rader, former member of the Green Berets, now a pacifist; Abbie Hoffman of the Diggers' Free Store in New York; David Dellinger, Jerry Rubin, and Robert Greenblatt of the Mobilization; Amy Swerdlow of Women Strike for Peace; William Pepper, executive director of the National Conference for New Politics (about to have their convention in Chicago); Carl Davidson of SDS; Lincoln Lynch of CORE; Fred Rosen of The Resistance; Lee Webb, co-director of Vietnam Summer; Dick Gregory, and —to everyone's surprise—H. Rap Brown of SNCC.

Reverend Hayes spoke to the press for the Mobilization and announced that the giant coalition group which grew out of the Spring Mobilization "is beginning to organize a confrontation in Washington on October 21-22 which will shut down the Pentagon. We will fill the hallways and block the entrances. Thousands of people will disrupt the center of the American war machine. In the name of humanity we will call the warmakers to task."

This was putting the best, most liberal and most constructive face on the projected activity, but the newspapers could also quote Dellinger—"There will be no government building left unattacked" (although the attacks "will be nonviolent"); Rubin —"We're now in the business of wholesale disruption and widespread resistance and dislocation of the American society"; Hoffman—"We're going to raise the Pentagon three hundred feet in the air"; and H. Rap Brown—"I would be unwise to say I'm going there with a gun because you all took my gun last time. I may bring a bomb, sucker."

This press conference naturally attracted huge attention in the press, most of it critical or mocking. The snide reaction was that the demonstrators would attempt to close down the Pentagon on a day (October 21 was part of a weekend) when it was already closed down, which was not quite true, for several thousand of the Pentagon's employees were present on any normal Saturday. That reaction was less significant than the dismay of the moderate peace groups through the country who on reading of this press conference were left shocked, fearful, and antagonistic. But these nega-

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tive reactions were whipped to a fury by the September 1 issue of the *Mobilizer*, newsletter of the Mobilization, which began with an editorial written in fire—and was backed with articles on Black Power, Rebellion, Resistance, plus an article by Keith Lampe "On Making a Perfect Mess" which included some of the following items:

> A thousand children will stage Loot-Ins at department stores to strike at the property fetish that underlies genocidal war.
> As the network cameras wheel in for classic counter-demonstrator footage, the BOMB PEKING picket signs will be flipped to say "Does LBJ suck?"
> During a block party in front of the White House a lad of nine will climb the fence and piss, piss. . . .

The first thousand copies of this issue were rushed to Chicago to be distributed at the convention of the National Conference for New Politics where the language induced a profound shudder in every middle-class element of the white Left, old and new. A storm of protest, indignation, and horror came back on the Mobilization. The general consensus of the older people on the Steering Committee was that this newsletter would not mobilize support but would destroy it. It was voted to suppress the issue, and a new issue containing a mild statement of aims written by Sidney Peck in the form of questions and answers, and directed obviously at women's groups and moderate peace groups, was hurriedly put out. From this point on, the Berkeley group which had been the inspiration for the first issue was conceivably in decline.

Dellinger had left for Czechoslovakia after the press conference on August 28. He came back in September to a period of near chaos and conflicting demands. The moderate peace groups, put in a panic by the nihilistic possibilities of the March on the Pentagon, now began to push their demands. They wanted a clear and adequate separation between the march and rally activity, and the civil disobedience and/or disruption which would follow (in order that people who wished to protest the war but did not want to be arrested or endangered could also join). They insisted that Mobilization's press release project a tone more peaceful, less militant. It was also understood that they would not give large support to the venture unless Dr. Spock could be induced to join it.

Of course these moderate peace groups were often radical themselves in some part, and were not opposed to "outright lawbreaking" if it was symbolic, peaceful, controlled—but the presence of these demands implicated Dellinger in a series of promises, details, and works of personal energy whose objective result was to inhibit any real mass approach to massive disobedience. Dellinger was now obliged to act in part as an agent for the interests of the peace groups even though their intent was critically less militant than his own. It could not have been the happiest position.

The scene now shifts to Washington, and negotiations with the government. A curious period begins.

IN THE BEGINNING, any question of jurisdiction must have been moot. It is safe to assume that no particular arm of the authorities would welcome the responsibility of negotiating with the demonstrators. A call to the Chief of the Park Police in Washington, D.C., Inspector Beye, was made by the Mobilization Committee and when it was explained what they wanted, Beye called a small meeting. Before the meeting was over, however, a man representing the Department of Justice exclaimed, "Do you expect us to allow this to take place?" The meeting broke up shortly afterward. No word came back from any representative of the government.

Mobilization waited ten days, then called Inspector Beye. He suggested they communicate with Harry Van Cleve, the general council of GSA—the Government Services Administration. Van Cleve had been selected to have jurisdiction for the government. He met with the committee shortly after, and a pattern of meetings was begun. Before they were finished perhaps eight meetings took place in late September and October, and indeed some details were to be argued until the very last night over such matters as the road to be permitted for the March from the Virginia side of the bridge to the Pentagon.

In these meetings, Van Cleve would come with an assistant who never spoke. The Committee, being a coalition, would arrive at meetings with as many as ten people. Dellinger, after his return, and Rubin and Greenblatt were at next to all the meetings, and others appeared if they happened to be in Washington on the day, or were interested in a specific point.

The first meeting with Van Cleve was perfunctory, and consisted of little more than an exchange of basic information, but in the next meeting, on October 6, Van Cleve, for the GSA (now representing the Park Police, Metropolitan Police, Defense Department, etc.) gave the following offer: the government would allow a rally at Lincoln Memorial, a march to the North Parking Area of the Pentagon, and a rally in the parking lot. But if the Mobilization did not relinquish all plans to break the law, the government would not even allow a rally.

At this point there was nothing to negotiate. The two parties were obviously not at all close to one another. Members of the Mobilization therefore left, and went back to their office, a three-story house at 2719 Ontario Road N.W., where a number of them got on the telephone to speak to dif-

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ferent groups around the country. The response which came back was militant, for the reaction was that the Johnson government was now entering a period of suppression. Indeed, the offer given by the GSA was unconstitutional. If a group massed peacefully, it could not be arrested for its intention. Sentiment was for having the rally anywhere in Washington or Virginia—wherever the police intervened, massive disruption would occur. The demonstrators could move out in every direction and put Washington in disorder. The response was militant even from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Martin Luther King was ill these days, in need of rest, and in need of time to rebuild the SCLC, but his assistant, Andrew Young, assured the Mobilization that King would be there in such a case. One didn't pick the day of the revolution. Feeling among the more moderate peace groups was then surprisingly strong. Men like Julian Bond, Dr. Spock, William Sloane Coffin, Jr., and Don Duncan indicated their determination to speak at the rally. It looked as if Rubin might yet have his epic of disruption.

Hundreds of phone calls had been made all over the country, however, and it is not easily believable that no one of the lines suffered from the wire tap. Even if there were no informers or government agents among the visitors to Mobilization House (also unlikely, since the high incidence of spies in left-wing movements was by now accepted as a chronic joke) it must be close to certain that the government was aware of the shift in sentiment, for at the next meeting of the GSA and the Mobilization, Van Cleve came in with a different set of suggestions. In contrast to the first meeting, Van Cleve was proper, even cordial at the second. The new offer proposed that the demonstrators assemble at Lincoln Memorial, go over Arlington Memorial Bridge, proceed on a road to be determined, to a rally in the North Parking Area, and then at a certain hour, those who wished could cross the four-lane dual Jefferson Davis Highway, enter the Mall in front of the Administration entrance, and climb the first rows of steps. This offer, made at the second meeting, was actually close to the final agreement drafted on the night before the March. All the essential elements, even the ground plan of the combat which ensued on October 21, were here indicated.

Now the conversations between Van Cleve and the Mobilization Committee were limited to technical matters and the specific points, no longer acrimonious affairs. The mood in the room—but for such occasional and unexpectedly visual elements as Rubin's mane of hair and the costume of a hippie whom he brought in one day—was not too dissimilar, although probably less intense, than an arbitration proceeding between a corporation and a union. No one can of course repress the wit who would point out that any time two bodies of men whose names end in Mobilization and Administration get together, even a revolution can be negotiated, and for fact Dellinger and Van Cleve had similarities in their personal style, since both men were more than the average civil, well-spoken, able to appreciate the nuances of the opposite view, and could with no difficulty have acted as contending parties at an Ivy League faculty meeting.

In fact, the meetings could have served as another paradigm of American civilization in this decade of the 20th century, for two groups with absolutely incompatible ends and an irretrievable lack of final resolution between them, were nonetheless adjudicators in effect with one another over the few small items of common ground which were negotiable, and this through its sheer instrumentalism—since it is somewhat more difficult to take militant action after negotiating quietly with one's enemy for weeks—was to work to pacify and finally curtail the more unmanageable aspects of the anti-war March.

DEBATE NOW proceeded over the finest points—the hour of the rally at the North Parking, the specified time when demonstrators could move on to the Mall, the special regulations—those for example who left the Mall after 7 P.M. on Saturday could not come back till noon the next day. So went a host of small points. The Mobilization asked for a rally at Lincoln Memorial and were granted it, adjustments of the area on the steps above the Mall permitted to the demonstrators were made, the duration of the permit was in question, and the access road.

It was to a degree incredible, as every paradigm of the 20th century is incredible. Originally the demonstrators were saying in effect: our country is engaged in a war so hideous that we in the greatest numbers possible, are going to break the laws of assembly in order to protest this impossible war. The government was saying: this is a war necessary to maintain the very security of this nation, but because of our tradition of free speech and dissent we will permit your protest, but only if it is orderly. Since these incompatible positions had produced an impasse, the compromise said in effect: we, the government, wage the war in Vietnam for our security, but will permit your protest provided it is only a little disorderly. The demonstrators: we still consider the war outrageous and will therefore break the law, but not by very much.

Each side was compromised, each side was, on the face of their professed attitude, absurd. Yet each party had the most pressing practical concerns to force them into collaboration. Dellinger had his moderate peace groups; Van Cleve, the interest of the government. An open white riot in the streets of the Capital after the summer riots in the Negro ghettos would telegraph a portrait of America to Global Village as an explosively unstable nation,

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therefore a dangerous nation on whom to count for long-term alliances since the explosiveness gave every sign of increase. Moreover, the possibility of a number of white Americans seriously wounded or killed by police, troops, or U.S. Marshals after the government's refusal to permit civil disobedience was even worse to contemplate. A concrete disaster of international publicity could result, especially if the police were too brutal. (And the police were ultimately less manageable than the wildest of the demonstrators.) It would be undeniably safer to permit civil disobedience. The problem would be then to limit its intensity.

Van Cleve's position in negotiation became simple. He had to look for every nuance of negotiation which would reduce the potential for violence of the demonstrators. So the choice of road and time of day and rally areas became critical. If the impact of this oncoming attack, part symbolic, part concrete, depended upon the quality of the revolutionary aesthetic—the revolutionary image, if you will, presented to the marchers as they came within range of the Pentagon—then the government, through Van Cleve, would do their best to dim that image. (They would also do their best to restrict the number of hours, even minutes, that the majority of demonstrators could be active at the Pentagon. So subtle engagements were fought by Van Cleve to restrict any entrance to the Mall until four P.M. Perhaps he knew the buses would be going back to New York at five, perhaps—this is sheer speculation—perhaps charter operators in New York were given the idea an early departure from Washington was desirable.

Since Dellinger in his turn was committed to two groups at once, and was therefore obliged to work in the opposed directions of what might be ultimately more violence or less violence, and since he was a man personally opposed to violence (as a Quaker) and had therefore no particular habits for comprehending its subtleties, the inference is large that Van Cleve from this point probably scored more for the government than Dellinger for the Mobilization.

Each small point the government requested was small indeed, too small to break off negotiation. The nightmare confronting Dellinger would be the press treatment of the Mobilization if a break occurred on what would seem an absurdly minor point—the choice of a road. Who could explain that to the mass media? Mobilization wanted Washington Boulevard or Jefferson Davis Highway for their March from the bridge, since each large road had a bold unimpeded view of the Pentagon almost all the way—the government insisted on Boundary Channel, a narrow side road now under repair and with but a restricted view of the building. The Mobilization, ideally, if it had been free to create the maximum of civil disobedience, would have been obliged to insist on the Pentagon Mall rather than the North Parking Area for their rally, since there was every difference in the sense given of the objective. A powerful orator speaking on the Mall would have been able to point to the Pentagon a hundred yards away across the grass—how different from the blurred view across wire fence and four-lane highway of a rally held in an oilstained parking lot more than a thousand feet away.

The Mobilization was to request the Mall for their second rally a number of times, but in that economy of barter which characterizes negotiation, they did not make an issue of it—rather it was a point they were ready to relinquish in return for other points: the assumption is that a part of the coalition did not really desire the Mall. Like Van Cleve, they assumed the disruption would be less in the North Parking.

IT HAD BEEN decided that a first rally would be held at Lincoln Memorial rather than just as an assembly. This was necessary to raise money (and in fact $30,000 was to be collected during the speeches). The length of this speakers' program grew under the pressure of every group which wished to be represented on the podium—there was as well, no doubt, the unspoken assumption by the moderates that hours of speeches would reduce the possibility of violence. (Never had a more middle-class group, more fundamentally opposed to violence, assembled in great numbers on an occasion whose precise novelty was that it promised precisely to be violent!)

Now there was pressure from the moderates to have another rally at the North Parking with more speeches. As far back as the second week of September Dr. Spock and representatives from Women Strike for Peace were arguing that the rally had to be held at Lincoln Memorial in order for women and children to be able to attend in freedom from disorder. (Also, the moderates thought it was essential to separate one rally completely from any civil disobedience, so that those who did not wish to go to the Pentagon would not be forced to.) On the other hand, the second speaker's rally at the North Parking had been planned from the beginning; it was now kept (despite the glaring possibility of many superfluous speeches) on the theory that those who did not wish to participate in civil disobedience would still need an *activity* (the influence of the progressive school is everywhere) on their arrival at the Pentagon, otherwise they might not march over the bridge. But obviously the parking-lot rally following in the wake of a two-hour speechfest at Lincoln Memorial was another deterrent to large civil disobedience.

Rubin and Dellinger were by now at considerable odds. At every point where the government had dulled the aesthetic, Rubin wished to brighten it—so he had wanted the rally in the Mall, had wanted

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to resist the choice of roads, had accepted with some unhappiness the limitation to one bridge—for the sight of two friendly armies coming together at the approaches to the Pentagon would prove inspiring—besides there would be more troops present at once, had wanted one rally, not two, and a plan to divert people back to Washington if opportunities at the Pentagon were small, he had been particularly unhappy with the late hour—4:00 P.M.—accepted from the government for the commencement of the "protest." So he had pleaded and/or argued with Dellinger that the government was all but compelled to negotiate an agreement and was therefore bluffing. Breaking negotiations would only make the government concede their points. It is likely Rubin felt the frame of reference had gotten away from him, and that the demonstration would end as another mass rally with interesting but essentially minor gestures of civil disobedience. So the difference between these leaders was by now fundamental. From Rubin's point of view, the concept had come a long way down from his first proud promise of "wholesale and widespread resistance and dislocation of the American society."

And Dellinger? We must speculate again. He had fulfilled his promise to the moderates, and so had been unable to go very far in the direction of a mass, symbolic, and prestigious pageant of nonviolent civil disobedience, but he had brought off the preparations for an unprecedented rally and action—it had been finally his responsibility, his nightmare if disaster struck and tens or hundreds of people were killed. Besides it is possible he had been true to both factions. The moderates had not been betrayed by him, the limitations upon civil disobedience were subtle and many, but they were not hermetic. Far from it. If an extraordinary potential for civil disobedience and disruption existed among the younger groups—and no one really knew—it would find any number of ways of flowing over the restraints. He had succeeded in fashioning therefore an action which was at once penned and open-ended—for the character of the civil disobedience still remained undefined, and that was an achievement. The government had been obliged to collaborate on details of an oncoming battle against its own jurisdiction, property, and troops. Medieval concepts of war seemed to be returning, or was it primitive contracts for battle?

We can pass over the mood of Washington in the few days before the March, the sympathetic and somewhat coordinated actions of protest in other parts of the country for the week preceding October 21, we may skip over the last meetings of the government and the Mobilization Committee, the denunciations in Congress, the bill which was passed on Friday, October 20, to protect the Capitol building from men carrying arms! And the scoldings and adjurations of newspaper editorials which remonstrated with the peace movement to remain peaceful. No, one we must give, it is from the New York *Times* on the day of the March.

> It will be totally unnecessary for paratroopers or police or demonstrators to provoke each other, in the exercise either of duty or of self-expression today— and it will be tragic if they do.
> The demonstrators will be betraying their own ideals if they follow those extremists who would deliberately turn the rally into a field of violence.

On Friday and Saturday morning, there were front page stories in the Washington papers on the arrival of troops, and a comic story on LACE, the hippies' counter-indicant for MACE. A man named Augustus Owsley Stanley, III had made it. His statement was that LACE "makes you want to take off your clothes, kiss people, and make love." Much enjoyable copy on hippie plans to attack with marbles, noisemakers, water pistols. They would jam gun barrels with flowers. They would try to kidnap LBJ and wrestle him to the ground and take his pants off.

Let us move then to the Pentagon. The speeches at Lincoln Memorial were done, and a mass of people, calculated by the New York *Times* as fifty thousand, walked over Arlington Memorial Bridge in the next two hours. Waiting for them at the Pentagon or engaged in police work on the route were the following forces: fifteen hundred Metropolitan Police, twenty-five hundred Washington, D.C. National Guardsmen, about two hundred U.S. Marshals, and unspecified numbers of Government Security Guards, Park, White House, and Capitol Police. There were also six thousand troops from the 82nd Airborne flown in from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, the same 82nd Airborne which had once parachuted into Normandy on D-Day, and was now fresh from Santo Domingo and the Detroit riots. M.P. units had been flown in from California and Texas, the U.S. Marshals had been brought from just about everywhere—Florida, New York, Arizona, Texas, to name a few states—it was to be virtually a convention for them. In addition, twenty thousand troops stationed nearby were on alert.

For the army of the demonstrators, no precise figures are available; government estimates were low and left-wing estimates were high. Taking the government figure, we have at a minimum an army of at least thirty-five thousand amateur soldiers consisting of a smattering and a sprinkling of doctors, dentists, faculty, veterans' groups, housewives, accountants, trade unionists, Communists, socialists, pacifists, Trotksyists, anarchists, artists, and entertainers; but the majority were col-

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lege students from all over the East, and high school students and hippies and diggers and bikers. And—we come to the beginning of the battle—a striking force of shock troops. There was a group which had arrived with a real idea of combat in mind.

This group consisted in fact of two groups, the Students for a Democratic Society, and a considerably smaller group of unattached elements who had once called themselves the Revolutionary Contingent, but had been unable to function together because of many arguments on the proper style of their militancy, i.e., whether to use Vietcong flags, or some of the specialized techniques of Japanese students, such as snake dances for breaking through police lines. Once, the Revolutionary Contingent had consisted of the Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front, the Black Mask, and other high-fragmentation sects, but now no alliance was left, other than their agreement to work together at the Pentagon. In preference to a new name, let us however still call them the Revolutionary Contingent.

That the Revolutionary Contingent happened to be in the vanguard was not surprising, but the body of the striking force remained the SDS, and that was significant, for the SDS, sharing apparently the detestation of some on the Left for the mass rally and the Great Left Pall, had a practice never to take part in large demonstrations. The Students for a Democratic Society did their work in the field—they organized in the colleges and went to live in the ghettos. They were an American form of the 19th-century back-to-the-people movements among Russian intellectuals.

But when on October 6 Van Cleve first stated that the government would not allow civil disobedience in any form, SDS decided to work for the March. (Thus, this first announcement of government repression had helped to bring in not only Dr. Spock on the Right but SDS on the Left of the Mobilization.) In the two weeks which followed, however, SDS enthusiasm cooled in some of the compromises. Yet in the week before the March, it still appeared as if the government and the Mobilization might be able to come to no agreement on details, and so the government would not grant the Mobilization Committee a rally and parade permit. So SDS kept up word to its members that Washington was very much an active front, worthy of their activity. They got ready for the March.

SDS was nothing if not wary of the Mobilization Committee and its tail of cautionary bureaucratic moderate peace groups. SDS did not wish to compromise its own militancy and its own view of civil disobedience, confrontation, and resistance by falling into the toils and instrumentalisms of the others. So it formed a temporary alliance to go into action with the Revolutionary Contingent. They would get themselves in the vanguard of the March—and, once on the Virginia side of the bridge, would separate from the other marchers and proceed by their own private route, running most of the way for a mile, through the woods to the North Parking Area where they would assemble and make their charge. Elements of SDS were lost on the rush, but determined not to wait and in fact obviously determined to start the combat before the second rally at the North Parking Area had well begun, the Revolutionary Contingent and SDS had charged across the parking area and made an assault on the military police barrier at a point considerably to the left of the Pentagon itself. They were stopped. There were barriers, there were troops, they were winded by their run all the way from Arlington Bridge, "the crowd was not yet mad enough to back them up," as one of their leaders was to put it later, and they were charged by M.P.'s with rifles and sheathed bayonets. It is possible that bayonets were in panic unsheathed—reports of such bayonets appear here and again in accounts, none remotely verifiable, even the hour in doubt; but for whatever reason the vanguard of this militant striking force certainly faltered, and abruptly fled backward in panic.

THEY HAD obviously been charged for combat for days, and such tension in men who are determined, usually succeeds in concealing from themselves the extent of their fear. In combat which comes after long spiritual preparation, there is an instant of relaxation in the very first moment altogether dangerous to dedicated troops—all the fear they have denied can now flood them. They can panic and flee—the inner preparation has been too great. (One must, after all, contemplate the extent of that fear, made up in part of sustained political brooding about the nature of American brutality at home and abroad—they were now going to confront this brutality; the very imagination which stimulated them to think radically now had added its exaggerations to the possibilities of reprisal.) Where the dedication is serious, however, the recovery is quick. Furious with themselves at this first rout, they now reassembled, conferred among themselves, climbed the embankment which bordered the four-lane Jefferson Davis highway, broke down the newly erected wire fence which restrained them to the Parking Area, gathered numbers from arriving unattached demonstrators and crossed the highway, entered the Mall, went up the long diagonal steps in the face of the stone wall which separates the asphalt plaza of the Administration entrance from the Mall, then climbed the approach steps, pushed back the M.P. line, and broke through it at the head of the stairs to fan out and occupy the left side of the plaza, only—so far as can be determined from the conflict of reports—to be immediately cut off from the

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main body on the stairs and the center of the plaza by a bracing of M.P.'s and U.S. Marshals who virtually separated the two groups, thereby making passage from the left side of the plaza back to the stairs impossible. Still, this group which overflowed the plaza on the left were to retain these positions until morning, by which time arrests and the attrition of departures had emptied their salient. More centrally located, the group in the center of the plaza and stairs was to hold its position for thirty-two hours, a perfectly legal position by the terms of the pre-March agreement between the government and the Mobilization Committee, although no one on the line, troops or demonstrators, was too aware of this, and illegalities on both sides in relation to this line abounded. The estimates in left-wing and underground newspapers put the number of demonstrators on the left of the plaza at twenty-five hundred, and the number on the central plaza, entrance stairs, and diagonal steps, leading to the stairs as double. Since underground papers seem to pride themselves on being even more inaccurate than their enemies, we can guess that there were no more than one thousand demonstrators in the "illegal area" of the plaza and a maximum of two thousand on the "legal" stairs, steps, and center of the plaza.

LET US NOT go another step into developments until we have fortified our picture of the situation. Far away from the plaza, a quarter of a mile away, across the Mall, the four-lane highway, a wire fence, and a small intervening hill, a rally is taking place in the North Parking Area and somewhere between ten and twenty thousand people, nervous, bored, uncertain whether they are relieved or disappointed that so little seems to be taking place, are out there receiving the long tasteless unleavened bread of fiery political speeches, the apogee of this irony achieved by the most militant speech of them all, made by Carl Davidson, the inter-organizational secretary of SDS (even SDS had its table of organization) who said, "Repression must be met, confronted, stopped, by whatever means possible." The next major demonstrations would arm to disrupt draft induction centers. "We must tear them down," he said, "burn them down if necessary." That was strong stuff. Over the hill, across the highway, along the Mall, up the steps, the first heads were being cracked by the clubs of the Marshals, while some true hearts of the orally-oriented Left were listening to their fourth hour of oratory—how much of one's own saliva must have been tasted by this point.

Younger spirits were now breaking down a new section of fence between the Parking Area and the highway in order to get to the Mall. The monitors appointed by the Committee made impotent efforts to hold them off. "You're not supposed to go over there until later!" they shouted through their bull horns while people crossed. All the while, marchers in that long line of fifty-four thousand people taking two hours to cross the Arlington Memorial Bridge were trickling into the Parking Area listening in confusion to the speeches (for many of the marchers must have foreseen a dramatic confrontation with a line of soldiers) and then looking about them for the next move. Meanwhile, rumors were arriving and passing through the crowd of the action at the Pentagon itself. As speakers continued, the crowd began to diminish—now thousands were going through the gap in the fence, crossing the highway, and invading the Mall. The legal time of entry on the Mall arranged by the government had been four o'clock, the first attack had come earlier, but the majority of demonstrators, being present at the Parking rally, did not cross over the Mall until 4:30, being thus left with not much more than an hour of daylight.

Meanwhile, in the vanguard, on the asphalt plaza and on the Pentagon steps, not a great deal was happening, yet everything was happening. The military situation had not altered appreciably, although a few significant events took place, notably three: first, a member of SDS, Tom Bell, succeeded in climbing an isolated wall of the plaza bordering the steps accompanied by his bull horn. He was thus in position to talk to the groups isolated on the left side of the plaza from the steps. When a Marshal or an M.P. (accounts conflict) attempted to pull him down, he pushed him off—to the cheers of the demonstrators watching—and proceeded to serve as communications center. He also proceeded—well-grounded doubtless in Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*—to talk to the troops. This was to be the first of many speeches to be made to them, and the content of these speeches must eventually be given, for the most conventional and original aspects of Left polemic were to be presented in turn by different speakers, some professional, some—girls, for instance, opening buttons on their blouses—improvisational. More of that, later.

The second significant event in this relatively constant military situation was that some of the demonstrators, having overrun the restraining lines of rope in their push through to the plaza, now began to use them. Tying knots in the ropes, they lowered them over the wall to the Mall where young demonstrators anxious to join them, now began to climb up. Since the wall was built of massive beveled blocks of stone, it was not altogether difficult to hold on to the rope and climb up, using the serrations for toeholds. Still, it had risk, a fifteen-foot drop on one's back at worst, and so the men who climbed were full of good morale on reaching the top and probably inspired the next and third significant action which is that a

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group probably composed in the main of SDS-Contingent on the plaza saw a side entrance door to the left of the main administration entrance guarded only by six M.P.'s. Since only a relatively thin line of MP.'s were on the line to restrain them here, a small group, perhaps twenty-five, made a quick push, broke the line, broke through the M.P.'s, and actually entered the Holy of Holies—they were in the Pentagon racing down a corridor.

Not for long! Troops had been brought into the Pentagon the night before, they had slept on cots in the corridors of the building (which is not unlike laying out one's mattress in Lincoln Tunnel). Confined inside, suffering the tension of endless hours waiting for unseen anarchists, bomb-throwers, Communists, poison gassers, poison-in-the-water, nymphomaniacs, drug addicts, insane Negroes, and common city folk to inundate them under their human wave in these drear corridors one can only guess—unless there are films—at the unmitigated fury with which the few demonstrators were clubbed and kicked, arrested, and carried off.

ONE CAN of course ask why so few felt obliged to attempt the sortie, and no one behind to follow them; the answers cannot be definitive. But two factors apply. One is the extraordinary demand for initiative on the side of the demonstrators if they were to do anything at all. Anyone who has passed through the educational system of America is in unconscious degree somewhere near half a patriot. (We may reduce the fraction when considering progressive schools.) The brain is washed deep, there are reflexes: white shirts, Star-Spangled Banner, saluting the flag. At home is corporation land's whip—the television set. Who would argue there are no ideasets of brave soldiers, courageous cops, great strength, and brutal patriotic skill in the land of authority? Obvious remarks, but it is precisely this huge and much convinced unconscious part of oneself which a demonstrator has to move against when he charges with his small part of an army into a line of M.P.'s close-packed, arms locked; anxiety washes the will with its dissolving flood. Demonstrators may break off at the last moment. Moreover one moves forward unarmed into men who hold clubs, or rifles. One does not even know the guns are unloaded—these are amateur soldiers so innocent of war they do not know enough to deduce that if there are no magazines loaded into the rifles, there can be at most but one round in the chamber. It was not so easy, therefore, when the moment came to charge into the Pentagon.

At any rate, if this is the military situation with which we are left, let us now take a look at the front line, at the six inches of no-man's-land across which troops and demonstrators—in the closest use yet of this word—confront each other.

II: The Steps of the Roaring Ladder

IT IS ON this particular confrontation that the conceit one is writing a history must be relinquished. Forget that the journalistic information available from both sides is so incoherent, inaccurate, contradictory, malicious, even based on error that no accurate history is conceivable. More than one historian has found a way through chains of false fact. No, the difficulty is that the history is now interior—no documents can give sufficient intimation: the novel must replace history at precisely that point where experience is sufficiently emotional, spiritual, psychical, moral, existential, or supernatural to expose the fact that the historian in pursuing the experience would be obliged to quit the clearly demarcated limits of historic inquiry. So these limits are now relinquished. The collective novel which follows, while still written in the cloak of an historic style, and, therefore, continuously attempting to be scrupulous to the welter of a hundred confusing and opposed facts, will now unashamedly enter that world of strange lights and intuitive speculation which is the novel. Let us, then, fortified by this clarification, this advertisement of intentions, move up to the front, to the six inches of no-man's land between U.S. Army and demonstrators.

It is safe to say that the beginning of this confrontation has not been without terror on each side. The demonstrators, all too conscious of what they consider the profound turpitude of the American military might in Asia, are prepared (or altogether unprepared) for any conceivable brutality here. On their side, the troops have listened for years to small town legends about the venality, criminality, filth, corruption, perversion, addiction, and unbridled appetites of that mysterious group of city Americans referred to first as hipsters, then beatniks, then hippies; now hearing they are linked with the insidious infiltrators of America's psychic life, the Reds!, the troops do not know whether to expect a hairy kiss on their lips or a bomb between their knees. Each side is coming face to face with its own conception of the devil!

Let us give the literal picture. At this early stage, before the demonstrators were to sit down, a close-packed line of M.P.'s with clubs, backed by another line of soldiers, was supported further by separate U.S. Marshals a few feet behind them, arrayed like linebackers—it could not have been unselfconscious. In other places of tension and at other times, soldiers were to advance with rifles, with sheathed bayonets, with tear gas, but this had not happened yet on this front, where the line of standing demonstrators was composed of a mix of

* From the title poem by Robert Lowell in *Near the Ocean.*

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SDS-Contingent with a greater number of unattached young demonstrators caught in the suction of the action. Posed against the lines of soldiers, already some historic flowers were being placed insouciantly, insolently, and tenderly in gun barrels by boys and girls.

Of course the rhetoric of the Left had been consistent in referring to these troops as innocent victims of the military machine and there is the real possibility that some fraction of the soldiers may have been secretly sympathetic to the demonstrators. The following is from an allegedly unedited tape of an interview with a soldier who had been at the Pentagon. "Around 40 per cent of all the military is in favor of your demonstration. This is a big point that I have found. They go out there, and around 30 per cent are just out to hurt anybody, beat anybody up they can, just because they have a rifle and all this other stuff. However, 30 per cent of them are sort of serene about the whole thing, and they couldn't care less. They have a job to do and that's all."

Since this interview was printed in the *East Village Other*, one cannot be certain it exists; psychedelic underground papers consider themselves removed from any fetish with factology. Still the dialogue has its ring—"sort of serene" is not an easy remark to make up. In any case, if the soldiers of this hour were not generally, by all accounts, interested in brutality, they were certainly fascinated by their foe, and when the minutes of confrontation went by and then the first hour, there began some lessening of woe and some lessening of the soldiers' extraordinary attention; the true literal fear of losing their lives began to go away from them. They had been sent out after all with God knows what orientation, "Well, men," says the major, "our mission is to guard the Pentagon from rioters and out-of-march scale prearranged-upon levels of defacement, meaning clear? Well, the point to keep in mind, troopers, is those are going to be American citizens out there expressing their Constitutional right to protest—that don't mean we're going to let them fart in our face—but the Constitution is a complex document with circular that is circulating sets of conditions—put it this way, I got my buddies being chewed by V.C. right this minute maybe I don't care to express personal sentiments now, negative, keep two things in mind—those demos out there could be carrying bombs or bangalore torpedoes for all we know, and you're going out with no rounds in your carbines so thank God for the .45. And first remember one thing more—they start trouble with us, they'll wish they hadn't left New York unless you get killed in the stampede of us to get to them. Yessir, you keep a tight ass-hole and the fellow behind you can keep his nose clean."

If the troops were relieved that a pullulating, unwashed orgiastic Communist-inspired wave of flesh did not roll right over them, and that in fact the majority of demonstrators right there before them were not unlike in appearance the few quiet long-haired cool odd kids they had never quite gotten to know in high school, the demonstrators in their turn were relieved in profounder fashion that their rank of eyes had met the soldiers, and it was the soldiers who had looked away. They looked across the gulf of the classes, the middle classes and the working classes. It would take the rebirth of Marx for Marxism to explain definitively this middle-class condemnation of an imperialist war in the last Capitalist nation, this working-class affirmation. But it is the urban middle class in America who always feel most uprooted, most alienated from America itself, and so instinctively most critical of America, for neither do they work with their hands nor wield real power, so it is never their lathe nor their sixty acres, and certainly never is it their command which is accepted because they are simply American and there, no, the urban middle class was the last class to arrive at respectable status and it has been the most overprotected (for its dollars are the great nourishing mother of all consumer goods) yet the most spiritually undefended since even the concept of a crisis in identity seems most exclusively their own. The sons and daughters of that urban middle class, forever alienated in childhood from all the good simple funky nitty gritty American joys of the working class like winning a truly dangerous fist fight at the age of eight or getting sex before fourteen, dead drunk by sixteen, whipped half to death by your father, making it in rumbles with a proud street gang, living at war with the educational system, knowing how to snicker at the employer from one side of the mouth, riding a bike with no hands, entering the Golden Gloves, doing a hitch in the Navy, or a stretch in the stockade, and with it all, their sense of élan, of morale, for buddies are the manna of the working class: there is a God-given cynical indifference to school, morality, and job. The working class is loyal to friends, not ideas. No wonder the army bothered them not a bit. But the working class bothered the sons of the middle class with their easy confident virility and that physical courage with which they seemed to be born—there was a fear and a profound respect in every middle-class son for his idea of that most virile ruthless indifferent working class which would eventually exterminate them as easily as they exterminated gooks. And this is not even to mention the sense of muted awe which lived in every son of the urban middle class before the true American son of the small town and the farm, that blank-eyed snub-nosed innocent, bewildered, stubborn, crew-cut protagonist of all conventional American life; the combination of his symbolic force with the working class, was now in focus here.

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STANDING AGAINST the soldiers were not only sons of the middle class, of course, but sons who had departed the middle class, they were rebels and radicals and young revolutionaries; yet they were unbloodied, they felt secretly weak, they did not know if they were the simple equal, man for man, of these soldiers, and so when this vanguard confronted soldiers now, and were able to stare them in the eye, they were in effect, saying silently, "I will steal your élan, and your brawn, and the very animal of your charm because I am morally right and you are wrong and the balance of existence is such that the meat of your life is now attached to my spirit, I am stealing your balls." A great exaltation arose among the demonstrators in that first hour. Surrounded on the plaza and on the stairs, they could have no idea of what would happen next, they could be beaten, arrested, buried in a stampede, most of them were on the mouth of their first cannon, yet for each minute they survived, sixty seconds of existential gold was theirs. Minutes passed, an hour went by—these troops were more afraid of them than they were afraid of the troops! Great glory. They began to cheer. Those who were not in the first row yelled insults, taunted the soldiers, derided them—the demonstrators in the front looked into the soldiers' eyes, smiled, tried to make conversation. "Hey, soldier, you think I'm a freak. Why am I against the war in Vietnam? Cause it's wrong. You're not defending America against Communism, you're just giving your officers a job." Some of the dialogue was better, some was worse, some was face to face, some by bull horn to the troops—technology land at the front. The dialogue was to change character yet, become more intimate, more awful, more excruciating for the soldiers, and the demonstrators; it was to go on for thirty-two hours of close-up dialogues across the line of confrontation, first standing, then—in response to the fear of stampede—sitting, faces inches apart, the demonstrators speaking softly, the soldiers under orders silent, some soldiers trembling—there were reports of officers coming up to say, "Steady, soldier!" and of soldiers here and there specifically relieved, even unconfirmed stories of three soldiers who took off their helmets and joined the demonstrators.

Of course this was only the first hour of thirty-two, and involved but the first line; three or four rows back the condition was different, one was safer, more anonymous—one's abuse could have more bite for considerably less cost. And down in the Mall a different condition existed, one of excitement, bewilderment, interest, anticipation. Cut off from the demonstration on the stairs or the plaza by the press of the crowd at the base, one had only to ignore the possibility of climbing the ropes and there was no way one could not in good conscience declare one had done his best. Of course, there were confrontations here as well. Where soldiers cut off the access roads, demonstrators from the Mall were pressing against them. Here the attitude was more ugly. Here soldiers were not cutting people off from the Pentagon, but from their own demonstrators, so the imperative to get through was more direct, the fear of being stampeded was less, there was all the Mall to run out into. Therefore the inability to mount a charge to break the soldier's line was less excusable, closer perhaps to cowardice—hence the ugliness of the crowd. And indeed far out in the Mall, isolated altogether from other soldiers were very small detachments on now unknown details, three soldiers here, five there. Newspaper stories referred to them. Breslin reported they were reviled and tormented unmercifully; when it got dark a few soldiers were beaten up—so goes the story. It may be well to quote Breslin here.

> Taste and decency had left the scene a long time before. All that remained were these lines of troops and packs of nondescript kids who taunted the soldiers. The kids went to the bathroom on the side of the Pentagon building. They threw a couple of rocks through the first-floor windows. The soldiers faced them silently. From the steps, a captain in the Airborne kept calling out through a bullhorn.
>
> "A Company, hold your ground, A Company," his voice said. "Nobody comes and nobody goes. Just hold your ground, A Company."
>
> The mob on the grass in front of the soldiers began chanting. "Hold that line, hold that line."
>
> There was no humor to it. These were not the kind of kids who were funny. These were the small core of dropouts and drifters and rabble who came to the front of what had started out as a beautiful day, one that would have had meaning to it. They turned a demonstration for peace, these drifters in raggedy clothes, into a sickening, club-swinging mess. At the end of the day, the only concern anybody could have was for the soldiers who were taking the abuse.
>
> On the steps leading from the grass to the blacktop the kids taunted the troops and kicked at them.
>
> "Hit them—they won't hit back," somebody yelled.
>
> A scraggly bearded guy in a blue denim jacket shrieked. He ran up with a flag holder and swatted a soldier in the back.
>
> Whatever it was that this peace march had started out to be, it now became an exercise in clawing at soldiers. And it lasted into the darkness.

In contrast let us now dare to give an extract from Gerald Long's account in the *National Guardian*. It is not a paper famous for its lack of

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bias and the account here is obviously partisan, but its virtues are to be brief and vivid.

Some demonstrators near the entrance and a good number behind the front lines urged the crowd forward, into a clash with the troops who were standing with rifles at the ready. A debate ensued. SDS leaders, also among the first near the doors, grabbed portable loudspeakers and urged the crowd to sit down. ("It would have been a bloodbath," SDS leader Greg Calvert commented later. "A thousand people could have been killed if they attempted to storm those lines unarmed. We regarded those urging the crowd forward as Left adventurers and tried to stop them. We succeeded.")

A company of M.P.s materialized from the right, running awkwardly like puppets. They stopped in front of the ramp, regrouped, leveled their rifles and marched forward. Unbelieving demonstrators just gaped at them, stunned, confronted for the first time by the guns of "our boys." Then something remarkable happened. People began laughing. Someone threw flowers at the M.P.s, who by now had stopped, frozen, guns pointed at young men and women their own age.

Every time the troops moved forward to push demonstrators away from the ramps, scores, hundreds of youth would sneak behind them—up the ramp. The M.P.s were enveloped. People were standing with faces just inches from the barrels of M-14 semi-automatics and an occasional single barrel shotgun.

The M.P.s executed an about face, seeking to clear out the demonstrators who ran behind them. A youth refused to be moved. A rifle butt landed in his stomach. He grabbed the rifle. Several youths grabbed rifles. Four helmets were stolen. A demonstrator was slugged. An M.P. was slugged.

White-helmeted federal marshals, impressed for service from the calm of courtrooms, moved forward, clubs swinging. It seemed to this observer—both in this incident and for the next thirty or so hours—that the marshals aimed particularly at women.

Each time the action stopped in a particular spot, demonstrators sought to speak with the soldiers, who were under orders not to respond. "Why are you doing this?" a demonstrator asked. "Join us" the soldiers were asked. It was obvious that some of the troops were weakening. A few soldiers seemed ready to faint. "Hold your lines, hold your lines," a captain repeated harshly, over and over, to the soldiers.

A girl confronted a soldier, "Why, why, why," she asked. "We're just like you. You're like us. It's them," she said pointing to the Pentagon. She brought her two fingers to her mouth, kissed them and touched the soldier's lips. Four soldiers grabbed her and dragged her away, under arrest. The soldier she had spoken to tried to tell them that she hadn't hurt him.

It may be obvious by now that a history of the March on the Pentagon which is not unfair will never be written, any more than a history which could prove dependable in details!

As it grew dark there was the air of carnival as well. The last few thousand marchers to arrive from Lincoln Memorial did not even bother to go to the North Parking lot, but turned directly to the Mall and were cheered by the isolated detachments who saw them from a ledge of the wall at the plaza. Somewhere, somebody lit his draft card, and as it began to burn he held it high. The light of the burning card traveled through the crowd until it found another draft card someone else was ready to burn and this was lit, and then another in the distance. In the gathering dark it looked like a dusting of fireflies over the great shrub of the Mall.

By now, however, the way was open again to the North Parking. The chartered buses were getting ready to leave. That portion of this revolution which was Revolution on Excursion Ticket was now obliged to leave. Where once there had been thirty thousand people in the Mall, there were now suddenly twenty thousand people, ten thousand people, less. As the buses ground through the interlockings of their gears and pulled out into a mournful wheezing acceleration along the road, so did other thousands on the Mall look at one another and decide it was probably time to catch a cab or take the long walk back to Washington—they were in fact hungry for a meal. So the Mall began to empty, and the demonstrators on the steps must have drawn a little closer. The mass assault was over.

A few thousand, however, were left, and they were the best. The civil disobedience might be far from done. On the Mall, since the oncoming night was cold, bonfires were lit. On the stairs, a peace pipe was passed. It was filled with hashish. Soon the demonstrators were breaking out marijuana, handing it back and forth, offering it even to the soldiers here and there. The Army after all had been smoking marijuana since Korea, and in Vietnam—by all reports—were gorging on it. The smell of the drug, sweet as the sweetest leaves of burning tea, floated down to the Mall where its sharp bite of sugar and smoldering grass pinched the nose, relaxed the neck. Soon most of the young on the Mall were smoking as well. Can this be one of the moments when the Secretary of Defense looks out from his window in the Pentagon at the crowd on the Mall and studies their fires below? They cannot be unreminiscent of other campfires in Washington and Virginia little more than a century ago. The Secretary of Defense is by all reports a complex man, a reader of poetry—does he have a secret admiration for the works of Robert Lowell as he stands by the window?

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But what had happened to the notables, to the leaders of the demonstration? We must move on.

When the speakers' rally at the North Parking Area was done, the leaders decided to join the others, and commit their own acts of symbolic civil disobedience. So Dave Dellinger, Dagmar Wilson, Dr. and Mrs. Benjamin Spock, Noam Chomsky, Sidney Lens, Barbara Deming, Dwight Macdonald, and Robert Lowell left the North Parking. Drifting through the Mall, entering dialogues with young demonstrators, or holding impromptu press conferences which would be forced to emphasize their unhappy distance from the action (and the press of the demonstrators on the steps might have been difficult to pass through) were alternatives which offered no grip—Dellinger wisely led the contingent past the Mall to a small grassy area, now untenanted but for soldiers, between Washington Boulevard and the west wall of the Pentagon. Here he planned to open another arena of action by engaging the troops in a teach-in. On their arrival, Dellinger suggested that those who had not spoken at the rally should talk to the soldiers. Father Rice spoke. Then Noam Chomsky. While he was speaking a line of soldiers left the west wall of the Pentagon and advanced gently on the notables, moving forward slowly, expressionlessly, and with a lack of violence which was bewildering for they passed silently through the figures about Dellinger without striking any of them, indeed making every effort not to touch them. A larger crowd of students who had accompanied Dellinger and Spock's contingent fled however before the soldiers, despite Dellinger's shouts through the bullhorn for them to hold ground, since the soldiers were not intending violence. But this group of demonstrators fled. Perhaps it was the movies they had seen of armies of zombies, perhaps it was the vitiated state of their liver after four hours of speeches—it was evident, no matter how, that rhetoric hand in hand with reason put no spirit of war into revolutionary boys. The notables, however, were made of firmer stuff—they turned around and began to address the soldiers who had passed by them. When this became apparently absurd—where does the teach-in begin on a man's back?—they turned about again, and walked once more toward the wall of the Pentagon. Now more soldiers suddenly double-timed out of an entrance, rifles at high port. Caught between two lines of soldiers, the ends pinched off, the notables were surrounded. The soldiers were silent.

Dr. Spock began to speak to the troops. He told a story which was obviously one of his favorites. He had received a letter not so long ago from a soldier who wrote to him from Vietnam in tones which condemned the war. Dr. Spock wrote back only to have his letter returned with the legend, "Verified deceased."

Now a Negro sergeant who had commanded the advance of the first line of troops came back, and said to the second line, "All right, push 'em out now."

The soldiers advanced, the notables sat down. Dr. Spock kept talking, and a flurry in which no account is clear took place. In the course of it, Dellinger, Dagmar Wilson, and Chomsky were arrested. Spock was not, although he made efforts to be arrested—it seemed conceivable the Marshals were under orders to leave him alone. Macdonald and Lowell were passed by. When it was all over, and some had been copped, and some hit by clubs (or rapped with the ends—for the Marshals were not conspicuously brutal here) Lowell, Macdonald, and a few others found themselves alone. The storm had passed. They left, unhurt, and eventually went home.

This excursion to the flank and arrest was not uncharacteristic of Dellinger's leadership in the weeks preceding the March. If Dellinger had been doing his best to be true to his principles and at the same time elucidate the maximum of practical advantage possible in the constricted situation which conciliation must obligatorily produce, he had on this occasion fulfilled just such a limited maximum. Not feeling determined to be with the demonstrators on the line, since the arrest of the notables would be in his mind a superior aim, he had made his own attack in an illegal area, and had attempted to teach the opposing soldiers. When this produced the order to push them out, Dellinger managed to get himself arrested, not easy in the face of the military's obvious policy of *random* arrest, and was out of jail in the same evening, also not so automatic. He was able therefore to be present at a press conference where he could claim a "tremendous victory." The protest, he was reported to say, marked the beginning of a "more militant mood, a more persistent mood, a more insistent mood." If the second half of the proposition was almost certainly correct, the first half did not necessarily precede it, for at the opposite end of the spectrum of Left opinion, bitter old veterans might have been remarking that out of such "tremendous victories" concentration camps were born. In fact it would not have mattered too much what did happen—Dellinger, like any leader of such a Mobilization, would have been bound to claim an enormous victory. It is this he could have told Jerry Rubin on the night before the March—if we are to make the unwarranted assumption that such cynicism was actually in his conscious head—that what happened at the Pentagon would not matter short of the most incredible victory—such as McNamara joining the demonstrators—or the most abysmal defeat, a paralysis of all activity before the sight of the troops. Anything less than these alternatives would produce the same predictable results—each

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side would claim a great victory for its own principles, the press would be naturally on the side of the authority (although much which was favorable to the other side would be *leaked*), and the left-wing and underground press and word of mouth would be sure to distort, enrich, ennoble, purify, and finally transpose the real history of the events to their own need; the real victory or defeat could be measured later by the military, money, and mass available for the next big operation. In the meantime he had appealed to the conscience of America, to the middle-class conscience at any rate, he had appealed through the attraction of the mass of numbers of the people who had attended, the numbers arrested, and the names of the notables. So he could have told Rubin—if he had been that cynical and by all evidence he was not—that the important thing, the only thing, was to have an action at the Pentagon, because that, given the processing methods of American newspapers, would be the only thing to come out of the event. Since the American Revolution must climb uphill blindfolded in the long Capitalist night, any *thing* which was publicity became a walking stick.

Rubin in such a dialogue could possibly have answered that although he agreed in part with Dellinger, there was still no real victory unless the troops at the front could leave with the conviction that something magical had been won. Rubin was a mystic, a revolutionary mystic—his roots were in Bakunin: so he believed that the chaos which followed disruption would force a crisis, force the government to overextend itself, and so would polarize the country and develop the strength of the Left who could build new values, new community, new power. So he must also have believed that nothing could be gained in the future which did not proceed from the truth of a victory whose light could be seen in the eye, that a war of publicity unillumined by inner victory was a war in a wallow with gobbets of dung, but that a true victory, if it came to only a few of the best of the very last hundred of the troops would put a radiance in the seed of their oncoming night. An extraordinary multiplication of the romantic, but it was not Rubin's apocalyptic vision alone—it had been seen before by men so vastly different (but for the consonants of their name) as Castro, Cortes, and Christ—it was the collective vision now of the drug-illumined and revolutionary young of the American middle class.

THE NIGHT went on. As the remaining demonstrators realized they were alone, and no longer linked to the eighty or hundred-thousand-headed force of men and women around the reflecting pool, or the fifty thousand at the Pentagon, but were instead down to a few thousand of the true, the adventurous, and the dedicated, their massive bourgeois complement now gone (not unlike the departure of an obese and wealthy mother-in-law) as they sensed that they were a smaller force, even by count of heads, to the troops around, about, and inside the Pentagon, so they knew the war could now become more serious, now their true weapons could show.

The campfires were lit, the pot—as already described—was passed; what prehistoric forms the dark bulk of the Pentagon must have taken from its spark, how the figures studying them with field glasses from the roof must have looked—how much like gargoyles on the ridge of a cathedral. Action was on in the night. Hungry, thirsty, the demonstrators were being fed—impromptu self-elected Diggers had organized transportation service for food and water. Beer came in, sandwiches, it was Saturday night—Saturnalia came in: couples began to neck on the grass, some awed by their audacity, some stimulated by the proximity of the Pentagon. Others, using spray cans, crayons, paints and brush began to write slogans on the stone wall of the Mall, the pier, the sides of the ramp. WAR SUCKS went one of the signs, PENTAGON SUCKS went another, FUCK WAR went a third. There was much to be made of this in the newspapers when all was done, and much to be made of the litter on the grass. That might have been a mistake—the litter. An army which leaves its litter behind could form the habit of leaving its dead behind, but the signs! They were easier to defend, for the legend PENTAGON SUCKS would reach the troops, it would reach every unit in the army before a month, and they would be a new breed of American soldiers if they did not laugh.

In the meantime the Army was not inactive. On the left access road where the Diggers had established a base in the chain of food transportation, tear gas was used by the troops—there seems no doubt of this. Too many eyewitness reports appeared in too many newspapers—indeed some reporters entered a night briefing in the Pentagon hardly able to see from tears in their eyes caused by gas discharged from canisters by soldiers, just in time to hear the Army deny they had used tear gas. Of course, some of the demonstrators had used tear gas too; so would swear Jimmy Breslin; so admitted one of the March leaders. It would in fact have been unlikely if out of this citizen's army of angelic and vicious children and youth, not one of that pill-ridden, electronically-oriented, chemically-grounded generation had not brought some gimmicks with gas. How else to play? That army of hippies and bikers would not be so unfrightening when their inventive pop-art genius turned to the craft of the nuisance weapon. Twenty years of comic strips were twenty years of surrealist seed.

The girls were now taunting the soldiers on the line. Something had happened with the line. Now soldiers were being rotated rapidly, sometimes by

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the half-hour—no relationship between troops and soldiers was to be permitted to grow. Perhaps for good cause. Earlier in the day, a couple of Negro demonstrators were reported to have taunted a Negro soldier until he had finally been obliged to hang his head, turn it away. One can conceive of the dialogue.

"Hey, nigger, how long you going to kiss Mr. Charlie's who-who-who? Going over to Vietnam, going to be nigger hero, huh? Going to have your photograph in a honkie paper, that right, is that right? Hey, Mr. Big, give us some skin, take your fat black hand off that honkie asshole rifle and give us some skin. You're the man! You're the man!"

Yes, they had skinned him with that Negro irony which could separate the most weathered hide from the most determined flesh—the wisdoms of torture were in their skill—how could any U.S. Army dare to put many Negroes on a line, if an army of black and white demonstrators would be there to face them, no, the troops might break and no one would know where—the loss was bitter on this night that the Black Militants pursuing their own revolution were dispersed in the black ghetto of Washington rather than here. The Blacks had their own army to form, the Black Left had more power over the White Left than over black people —besides, some instinct in the Black had them wary of the New Left's automatic acceptance of technology land (the New Left tended to think technology land was acceptable except for its management by corporation land; the Black Left now interested in discovering itself had unruly jungle intuitions that technology land and corporation land might be the same).

With Negroes or without, fraternization on the line continued. Draft cards continued to be burned —each one a flutter of anxiety in everyone's heart, a release of fire on wings. Contemplate the humiliation to a college student if he hates the war and keeps the card in his wallet—how it says to him each time he looks for an address: You are yellow, buddy, for you keep me. So the cards burned one by one through the night, each man sitting in his position on the steps, the plaza, or the Mall, with his own card burning inside him, his stomach a glut of elation and woe as each new card went up from the dark in flame, suddenly it is his own, he —wild revolutionary youth, conservative middle-class boy, keeper of draft cards—his schizophrenia is burning and the security of the future with it. He looks for a girl to kiss in reward.

SEX, FEAR, the lift of first courage, the lightness of freedom, the oncoming suffocations of dread, the wild swinging ache or the somnolent drift of the pot, the biting cold of the night, the Civil War glow of the campfire light on all those union jackets, hippies on the trail of Sergeant Pepper—the U.S. Army looking out on a field of fires heard demonstrators talking to them, crying, "Join us, Join us," demonstrators talking in low voices, "Why do you stay in uniform? Do you like the helmet on your head, is that it? Do you like obeying officers you hate? Join us. We have everything. Look. We are free. We have pot, we have food we share, we have girls. Come over to us, and share our girls"—a generosity of Eskimoes and the New Middle Class which these soldiers of the working class and the small town would not be quick to comprehend—who gives his girl away, would be their question. And the answer—a fag! Yes, the hippies offered much, perhaps they offered too much.

The girls conducted their war. They had been walking in view of the soldiers, talking to the soldiers, standing in front of them, studying them, putting flowers in their barrels, smiling—some were gentle and sweet, true flower girls; others were bold and with the well-seasoned and high-spiced bitch air of fifty Harlem pickup lovers in a year, not saying how many whites—they unbuttoned their blouses, gave a real hint of cleavage, smiled in the soldier's eye, gave a devil laugh, then a bitch belly laugh at the impotence of the man's position in a uniform, helpless to reach out and take her. And the Marshals behind the soldiers, tense as police dogs, wheeling up and down the line, glaring at demonstrators, rapping their clubs against their hands, dying for their own precise kind of action.

Once in a while an arrest would be made. It seemed never to make much sense. A seated demonstrator might touch a soldier by accident, the Marshal would reach through the soldier's legs, grab the demonstrator, pull him through, another Marshal would join him, a quick beating, a move off to the waiting wagon or truck. All day, the arrests had made no sense. There had been in the beginning an obvious attempt to hold arrests down, then a wave of arrests when SDS-Contingent took the corner of the plaza, then this long period from dark to midnight with random scattered meaningless arrests.

There was meaning in it. The deepest sort of technological meaning: the technique of avoiding martyrs in riots. The essence of that technique is to arrest at random. The arrested hero having done nothing in particular feels like a victim or a fool. Upon his release, his friends treat him like a hero. But he is the sort of hero who must end by disappointing them. That is part of the technical wisdom of random arrest. It also disrupts, since no preparation for self-protection can be made, no sense of slow immersion into the possibility of arrest is possible, and the growth of rumor is exaggerated—for random arrests seem always more brutal than more logical arrests. In fact they are more brutal.

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One element of these arrests was however not random at all. A startling disproportion of women were arrested, and were beaten in ugly fashion in the act. Dagmar Wilson, the leader of Women Strike for Peace, was treated more brutally by the Marshals than any of the male notables. She was hardly alone. Over and over, eyewitness account after eyewitness account gives brutal deadening news of the ferocity with which Marshals and soldiers went to work on women. But let us move into these accounts.

SOME TIME after midnight, the press was called into the Pentagon for a final press conference before going home. The Secretary of Defense had left, the television was gone. There was an hiatus in the coverage of the event. It was a moment which somebody in command had obviously anticipated. New columns appeared from the building. The soldiers who had been on the line were replaced. The new soldiers were veterans of Vietnam. Such men had been on the plaza since dark, but this detachment seemed specially trained, a fierce cry away from the more frightened reserves who had been first on the line in the afternoon, and had lost that confrontation of the two lines of eyes in the first hour. The strength gained by the demonstrators then, was now to be tested in quite another fire. What came to be known as the battle of The Wedge was here begun. Let us get news of it by an extract from an eyewitness account by Margie Stamberg in the *Washington Free Press.*

> When the paratroopers with their M-14 rifles, bayonets, clubs, and stone faces appeared, the bull horns set up a call for reinforcements from those resting at the campfires below.

Note that the bullhorns seem to set up an immediate call. How palpable must have been the shift in mood.

> A tight resistance of row upon row of people sitting with locked arms was formed. Then the squeeze began. We saw at first individuals in the front lines being dragged out behind the troop lines and carried away. Suddenly, the troops which had been in single rows in front of the crowd formed into a wedge on the right side. Their tactic apparently was to split the group in two and force them to move back. No explanation was given for the sudden action. Paddy wagons rolled up, soldiers with tear gas guns appeared among the troops, and from the mall behind, other troops began to form.
>
> Slowly the wedge began to move in on people. With bayonets and rifle butts, they moved first on the girls in the front line, kicking them, jabbing at them again and again with the guns, busting their heads and arms to break the chain of locked arms. The crowd appealed to the paratroopers to back off, to join them, to just act human. They sang the "Star Spangled Banner" and other songs: but the troops at this point were non-men, the appeals were futile.
>
> The pleas of SDS people on the bull horns to convince the group to pull back in the face of a tactically deadened situation went unheeded. And so we sat. Some individuals left, but most remained. To leave was to leave one's brothers and sisters to get clubbed, yet to passively remain in the locked chain was also to participate in the senseless brutality. The victory of before was forgotten. In the dark the paratroopers began to move.
>
> As they clubbed the marked person, usually a girl, in the first row, and dragged her away, the ranks in back closed in tighter. The person in the row behind became the front, was subjected to blows and kicks, dragged away, and the troops went on to the third row. Then the fourth, the fifth, the sixth rank, and so on until the people were finally separated into two groups. One hundred people were methodically beaten and carried away to the paddy wagons.
>
> The wedge beat through to the last line, and the resistance was broken. Those left, who had been locking arms, stood up and waited quietly to be taken to the paddy wagons which continued to arrive. No one was leaving now as thousands there prepared for arrest.
>
> One cannot articulate the agony of those who sat and watched this go on slowly for hours amidst the songs, the pleas, the tears, and the impotent curses of "motherfucker" and "bastards!" from those who could not leave yet could not resist.
>
> When the resistance had been broken, the brutality stopped, the crowd prepared for arrest, word came that McNamara had arrived at the Pentagon. When this was announced on the bull horns, the troops stopped attacking immediately. Sidney Peck of the National Mobilization Committee took the bull horn from SDS and begged the troops to stop until the person responsible within the Pentagon for the massacre order could be found for an explanation. Peck insisted we had been given a permit to remain on the steps which the troops were violating. This speech, to many of us, was a funeral oration. All during the day the legality or illegality had been superfluous; the permit, a petit-bourgeois hang-up for those who had come to confront the warmakers. We didn't want the brutality to stop BECAUSE we had a permit; if it was to stop it must stop because we had beaten them, or they had carried the last one of us away.

Let us have another account from the same newspaper. This one is by Thorne Dreyer.

> The second phase of the demonstration was pretty much a bad scene. And I'm not sure why. For one thing, they kept changing the troops. Whenever we'd start really talking to the guys,

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they'd move them out. Maybe they finally brought in their "crack" troops. Lots of people left. It got dark and cold. But this is most important: There was a tactical vacuum. We were in a box.

Suddenly we were defensive and scared. We sang "We Are Not Afraid." Earlier, we did not have to sing it. There was no communication with the troops now. We chanted, "Join Us!" and "We Love You" and it was meaningless rhetoric. People kept bringing more and more food and we gorged ourselves and that food became really obscene. We started bickering and began to sing "We Shall Overcome" and were right back in that liberal bag. There were a few people who were totally committed to getting their scalps torn open, and a few who thought it would be tactically best to leave, and a hell of a lot who were scared shitless, but just didn't know what to do. There were lots of young kids who had really been moved by the spirit of the thing and weren't about to leave if leaving meant a defeat. And at that point I guess it would have.

The cops began to get really brutal, moving into the group in a wedge and smashing heads with billy clubs. These beautiful little hippie chicks had tears streaming down their faces, but they weren't about to move. These kids were really brave. And I began to resent the "supermilitants" who created so much pressure to stay. Because that was nothing but goddamn bourgeois politics. At this point we had moved from confrontation right back to symbolic protest.

The brutality by every eyewitness account was not insignificant, and was made doubly unattractive by its legalistic apparatus. The line of soldiers would stamp forward until they reached the seated demonstrators, then they would kick forward with their toes until the demonstrators were sitting on their feet (or legally speaking, now interfering with the soldiers). Then the Marshals would leap between their legs again and pull the demonstrator out of the line, he or she would then be beaten and taken away. It was a quiet rapt scene with muted curses, a spill in the dark of the most heated biles of the hottest patriotic hearts—to the Marshals and the soldiers, the enemy was finally there before them, all that Jew female legalistic stew of corruptions which would dirty the name of the nation and revile the grave of soldiers like themselves back in Vietnam, yes, the beatings went on, one by one generally of women, more women than men. Here is the most brutal description of a single beating by Harvey Mayes of the English Department at Hunter.

One soldier spilled the water from his canteen on the ground in order to add to the discomfort of the female demonstrator at his feet. She cursed him—understandably, I think—and shifted her body. She lost her balance and her shoulder hit the rifle at the soldier's side. He raised the rifle, and with its butt, came down hard on the girl's leg. The girl tried to move back but was not fast enough to avoid the billy-club of a soldier in the second row of troops. At least four times that soldier hit her with all his force, then as she lay covering her head with her arms, thrust his club swordlike between her hands into her face. Two more troops came up and began dragging the girl toward the Pentagon. She twisted her body so we could see her face. But there was no face there: All we saw were some raw skin and blood. We couldn't see even if she was crying—for her eyes had filled with the blood pouring down her head. She vomited, and that too was blood. Then they rushed her away.

One wonders at the logic. There is always a logic in repression, just as there is always a logic in the worst commercial. The logic is there for a reason—it will drive something into flesh.

The logic here speaks of the old misery of the professional soldier, centuries old. He is, at his most brutal, a man who managed to stay alive until the age of seven because there were men, at least his father, or his brothers, to keep him alive—his mother had drowned him in no oceans of love; his fear is therefore of the cruelty of women, he may never have another opportunity like this—to beat a woman without having to make love to her. So the Marshals went to work; so did those special soldiers saved for the hour when everyone but themselves and the Marshals was gone from the Pentagon. Now they could begin their beatings.

YES, AND they beat the women for another reason. To humiliate the demonstrators, to break them from their new resistance down to the old passive disobedience of the helpless sit-in waiting one's turn to be clubbed; they ground it into their faces that they sat there while their women were being taken off and no one of them or group of them dared to charge for all that hour. It is the worst hour at the Pentagon for the demonstrators—and the worst hour for the speakers on the bullhorn who quieted the militants who wanted to make some sort of charge. Yes, it was a difficult hour—the working class had plucked all stolen balls back. Great cheer. With rifles and clubs they had plucked them back. It is a large blemish on the demonstrators that they were supine in the wedge, but it is comprehensible. There is a dead nerveless area on the Left, comprised of the old sense of paralysis before the horror of the gas chamber. There are very few on the Left who do not live with the partial belief their own life someday will end in a such a way—perhaps that is why they are hung like a string of fish on the power of the public speech for all occasions. In a crowd listening to a speech, perhaps they are then

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farthest from the nightmare of retching up one's last salts in the incredible ballooning suffocations of the last gas. Perhaps it is better to die each public evening by such an inch. One wonders why no musicians were playing as the clubs came down—just motherly legalistic injunctions from the bullhorn; motherly! the clubs of the Marshals, the butts of the rifles of the soldiers came down with more force. Kill the mothers! All the while, rumors passed. A demonstrator was already dead they heard—then next that they were all to be taken away and beaten one by one. Now the rumors changed. At X hour, a charge would come down on them. They would be clubbed to death.

It was still possible to leave. It was possible every inch of that slow advance of the wedge for demonstrators to leave. But they sat there expecting to share the fate of the girls and the boys being beaten now. So it is not altogether shameful. If they did not defend their allies by action, they defended another ideal by their presence, by their refusal to flee. And the pot had deprived them of force. The Wedge had come on their slide down from elation into the long bad stoning of their collective head as mental connections begin to miss and reports of new small brain damage reach the home of the mind. Apathy. Depression. Then the battle of The Wedge.

They were shriven in the hours till dawn. Rumors went through the cold night and the 40° of darkest early morning that the charge would be coming or a new wedge. They were down to four hundred demonstrators, a hundredth of the force which had come to the Pentagon—they were out on the cold exaltation of having survived, of having remained—they were therefore tempted to stay and stay, to stay to the very end. They were now engaged in that spiritual test so painful to all—the rite of passage. Let us ruminate with them and contemplate the dawn.

THE FEW HUNDRED demonstrators still left in vigil on the stairs of the Pentagon in those dark hours after The Wedge and before the dawn were being exercised in all those nerves which lead to the moral root—a physical and spiritual transaction whose emotions are, at worst, so little agreeable as the passage of the dentist's drill toward the nerve canal of a tooth. It was bitterly cold, and they slept huddled together, beggared by discomfort, even occasional acts of petty viciousness. A sergeant went down the line at 5 A.M. pouring cold water from his canteen on the sleeping bodies.

Generally, however, there were few incidents. The Wedge had left no desire for more fight on either side. The Army had been guilty of illegal activity and knew it: the section of plaza they emptied during the wedge had clearly belonged by the terms of the agreement with the government to the area provided for demonstrators—so a few officers must now have been contemplating their actions nervously—the hippies and pacifists still remaining on the stairs could not have felt even an instant of security. In the early morning hours, rumor must have been a leaden dread, stories of what was certain to come next must have sunk into the heart—their journey into the dawn of Sunday was not routine. Cowardice lives in waves, in congealed layers, in caverns of the psyche, in treacheries of fear next to the boldest moves; it also lives encysted in all the firmest structures of the ego. How many of these demonstrators, certain at the beginning of the night by the firm conviction of their ego that they would not leave until morning, must have been obliged to pass through layers and dimensions and bursting cysts of cowardice they never knew to exist in themselves, as if each hour they remained extracted from them a new demand, a further extension of their moral resolve, another rung up the moral ladder. Yes, the passage through the night against every temptation to leave—the cold, the possibility of new, more brutal, and more overwhelming attacks, the boredom, the middle-class terror of excess (if one has done two or three good acts in a row, it is time to cash them in), the fear of moral vertigo (one courageous action resolutely following another without compromise and without cease must end in the whirlpool of death), yes, even the fear that if they remained through the night, they would be obliged to remain through the morning, the afternoon and the evening of the next night, and even then! would there be ever an end? Yes, the passage through the night brought every temptation to leave including the thundering schisms of muttered political argument in the dark—the proud advertisements of the new resistance had been ground back to the old masochistic tramping grounds of the sit-in—an argument which was undeniable, and could have prevailed, except if they left, and no one was at the Pentagon then but the soldiers through the night, well what unseen burning torch of which unknown but still palpably felt spirit might expire? No, this passage through the night was a rite of passage, and these disenchanted heirs of the Old Left, this rabble of American Vietcong and hippies and pacifists and whoever else was left were afloat on a voyage whose first note had been struck with the first sound of a trumpet blown the morning before. "Come here, come here come here," the trumpet had said, and now eighteen hours later, in the false dawn, the echo of far greater rites of passage in American history, the light reflected from the radiance of greater more heroic hours may have come nonetheless to shine along the inner space and the caverns of the freaks, some hint of a glorious future may have hung in the air, some refrain from all the great American rites of

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passage when men and women manacled themselves to a lost and painful principle and survived a day, a night, a week, a month, a year, a celebration of Thanksgiving—the country had been founded on a rite of passage. Very few had not emigrated here without the echo of that rite, even if it were no more (and no less!) than eight days in the stink, bustle, fear, and propinquity of steerage on an ocean crossing (or the eighty days of dying on a slave ship), each generation of Americans had forged their own rite, in the forest of the Alleghenies and the Adirondacks, at Valley Forge, at New Orleans in 1812, with Rogers and Clark or at Sutter's Mill, at Gettysburg, the Alamo, the Klondike, the Argonne, Normandy, Pusan—the engagement at the Pentagon was a pale rite of passage next to these, and yet it was probably a true one, for it came to the spoiled children of a dead, de-animalized middle class who had chosen most freely, out of the incomprehensible mysteries of moral choice, to make an attack and then hold a testament before the most authoritative embodiment of the principle that America was right, America was might, America was the true religious war of Christ against the Communist. So it became a rite of passage for these tender drug-vitiated jargon-mired children, they endured through a night, a black dark night which began in joy, near foundered in terror, and dragged on through empty apathetic hours while glints of light came to each alone. Yet the rite of passage was invoked, the moral ladder was climbed, they were forever different in the morning than they had been before the night, which is the meaning of a rite of passage, one has voyaged through a channel of shipwreck and temptation, and so some of the vices carried from another nether world into life itself (on the day of one's birth) may have departed, or fled, or quit; some part of the man has been born again, and is better, just as some hardly so remarkable area of the soul may have been in some minuscule sweet fashion reborn on the crossing of the marchers over Arlington Memorial Bridge, for the worst of them and the most timid were moving nonetheless to a confrontation they could only fear, they were going to the land of the warmakers. Not so easy for the timid when all is said.

But of course this rite of passage was hardly to end as yet. The morning came; very cold, very quiet, unexciting. Demonstrators left, all but a token force. Were there even a few hundred? The others rushed to places for a few hours sleep, then returned. By ten in the morning, two thousand may have been back. The day was different. There was not much militancy now, but long speeches, different somehow from the speeches of the day before, because the listeners moved now on the currents of the night before and the bloodyings. Now and again draft cards were burned, and for a part of the day, Gary Rader, once a member of the Green Berets, gave a speech which was thought by many to be the best hour of them all.

Night was on. The demonstrators were entering the last few hours of their march on the Pentagon. They were tired, exceptionally tired, they felt vulnerable—their aggression, their ability even to defend themselves now used up by endless calls over the hours for more adrenalin; yes the mood was pacifistic, almost saintly, but very weak. In the night, they were all close to each other. Quietly. They were waiting. The walls of the Pentagon bulked large.

Fifteen minutes before midnight, a voice boomed out of a loudspeaker in the wall. To the demonstrators it sounded like the voice of the Pentagon. Big Brother had come to be heard.

"The demonstration in which you are participating," said the voice, "ends at midnight. The two-day permit which was agreed to by leaders of the demonstration and GSA expires at that time. All demonstrators must depart from the Pentagon grounds at midnight." A silence.

"All persons who wish to leave voluntarily can board buses on the Mall." A pause. "Those demonstrators who do not leave voluntarily by midnight will be arrested and taken to a federal detention center. . . . All demonstrators are urged to abide by the permit." So the government remained to the end what it had been from the beginning: one part legalistic, one part cooperative, and one part threatening—or is it rather—one part in the area of the non-negotiable?

There was a short silence, hardly time for the demonstrators to do more than reckon with the fact that another rung in the rite of passage had been presented. But again the Voice spoke out of the Pentagon wall. "I say again to you. The demonstration in which you are participating . . ." and the same speech was read to the same conclusion. Thirty-four demonstrators accepted the offer to leave.

Let us quote from the Washington *Star*. For once, a newspaper account seems to agree with eyewitness reports. One must, of course, as always, beware of adjectives and estimates of number. Adverbs are to be shunned.

> During its last hour the demonstration seemed no menace to the helmeted legions still facing them across a single-strand rope barrier. The crowd was down to its last 200.
>
> Repeatedly, almost pleadingly, the march's leaders at that hour had reminded the soldiers and the marshals—by loudspeaker—that arrests should be made non-violently to fulfill a supposed promise.
>
> At 11:46 an amplified voice echoed across the

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helmeted troops and federal officers and out to the now-tense 200.

"The demonstration in which you are participating ends at midnight."

"I say again to you. The demonstration in which . . . " and on to a second full reading.

"No," Crowd Cries

This done, there was a moment of silence. Then, "No," a muted chorus from the demonstrators. Then, more lustily, the chant: "Hell no, we won't go, hell no, we won't go."

Almost immediately, 57 helmeted U.S. marshals filed out of the Pentagon, across the Mall, and behind the front line of M.P.s.

The crowd started singing, mournfully, "We Shall Overcome." Most sat down, immediately in front of the first M.P.s. A futile attempt at "God Bless America," then more "We Shall Overcome."

And then again, from the loudspeakers: "Attention all demonstrators. The demonstration in which . . . " It was repeated twice then, with the added notice that "It is now 11:55 P.M."

"God Bless America" issued from the protesting remnant, their number diminished by the 34 who had accepted the ride to freedom.

Second Bus Drives Off

The announcement came again, this time with the notice: "It is now 11:58 and a half P.M." And then: "It is now 12 P.M."

A minute passed, and the second "Freedom bus" drove off. There was some shuffling about at the east end of the marshals' line, but still no fulfillment of the arrest notice.

The closed vans, Occoquan-bound, began moving into position at two minutes after 12. And then the troops tightened around in a triangle, and the marshals moved in on the demonstrators, now singing "This Land Is My Land," and then "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," and finally—over and over—"We Shall Overcome."

It was a curious last act. Almost conversational. Said a priest to a marshal: "Don't club that boy; this is non-violent." And there was no clubbing. Said a bearded boy to a soldier: "I am going limp." He did, and the soldier obligingly lifted him.

The arresting went so smoothly then that the vans could not be moved up fast enough to accept the prisoners.

After six vans, two panel trucks and that one unused "freedom bus" were loaded and driven off, it was over.

When the count was made, there proved to be one thousand arrests. It was not a small number; it was not an enormous number—it was certainly a respectable number to be arrested over thirty-two hours in protest of a war. Six hundred had charges pressed. The others were taken to the back of the Pentagon, photographed, and driven away in buses to be released on the street. Of the six hundred arrested, no felony charges for assault were brought in, indeed only a dozen were charged with assault, only two went to trial and both were acquitted.

YES, THE END seemed to have come, and the immediate beneficiary of the March could be nobody other than the President of the United States. Lyndon Johnson made a point to have his picture taken Saturday sitting at a table on the White House lawn with Hubert Humphrey, Dean Rusk, and Orville Freeman. The caption informed that he had spent the day in work. Headlines on Monday: "LBJ Hits Peaceniks." He had sent a memorandum to Defense Secretary McNamara and Attorney General Clark. "I know that all Americans share my pride in the man in uniform and the civilian law enforcement personnel for their outstanding performance in the nation's capitol during the last two days. They performed with restraint, firmness, and professional skill. Their actions stand in sharp contrast to the irresponsible acts of violence and lawlessness by many of the demonstrators."

The press was, in the aftermath, antagonistic to the March. Some measure of the condemnation and the abuse can be indicated by quoting Reston of the *Times* who was not immoderate in his reaction. Nor untypical.

> It is difficult to report publicly the ugly and vulgar provocation of many of the militants. They spat on some of the soldiers in the front line at the Pentagon and goaded them with the most vicious personal slander.
>
> Many of the signs carried by a small number of the militants, and many of the lines in the theatrical performances put on by the hippies, are too obscene to print. In view of this underside of the protest, many officials here are surprised that there was not much more violence.

The rest of the stories went about that way.

Emphasis was put on every rock thrown, and a count was made of the windows broken. (There were, however, only a few.) But there was no specific mention of The Wedge. Indeed, stories quickly disappeared. No features nor follow-up a few days later. In six weeks when an attempt was made in New York to close down the draft induction centers, it seemed that public sentiment had turned sharply against resistance. The Negro riots had made the nation afraid of lawlessness. Lyndon Johnson stood ten percentage points higher in the

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popularity polls—he had ridden the wave of revulsion in America against demonstrators who spit in the face of U.S. troops—when it came to sensing new waves of public opinion, LBJ was the legendary surf-boarder of them all.

It probably did not matter. Ever since he had been in office, the popularity of LBJ had kept going up on the basis of his ability to ride every favorable wave, and had kept going down on the unwillingness of the war in Vietnam to fulfill the promises his administration was making. So his popularity would go up and down again. There would be many to hope it did not go up in the last week before election.

Probably it was in Occoquan and the jail in Washington, D.C. that the March ended. In the week following, prisoners who had chosen to remain, refused in many ways to cooperate, obstructed prison work, went on strikes. Some were put in solitary. A group from the Quaker Farm in Voluntown, Connecticut, practiced non-cooperation in prison. Among them were veterans of a sleep-in of twenty pacifists at the Pentagon in the spring before. Now, led by Gary Rader, Erica Enzer, Irene Johnson, and Suzanne Moore, some of them refused to eat or drink and were fed intravenously. Several men at the D.C. jail would not wear prison clothing. Stripped of their own, naked, they were thrown in the Hole. There they lived in cells so small that not all could lie down at once to sleep. For a day they lay naked on the floor, for many days naked with blankets and mattress on the floor. For many days they did not eat nor drink water. Dehydration brought them near to madness.

Here was the last of the rite of passage, "the chinook salmon . . . nosing up the impossible stone," here was the thin source of the stream—these naked Quakers on the cold floor of a dark isolation cell in D.C. jail, wandering down the hours in the fever of dehydration, the cells of the brain contracting to the crystals of their thought, essence of one thought so close to the essence of another—all separations of water gone—that madness is near, madness can now be no more than the acceleration of thought.

Did they pray, these Quakers, for forgiveness of the nation? Did they pray with tears in their eyes in those blind cells with visions of a long column of Vietnamese dead, Vietnamese walking a column of flames, eyes on fire, nose on fire, mouth speaking flame, did they pray, "O Lord, forgive our people for they do not know, O Lord, find a little forgiveness for America in the puny reaches of our small suffering, O Lord, let these hours count on the scale as some small penance for the sins of the nation, let this great nation crying in the flame of its own gangrene be absolved for one tithe of its great sins by the penance of these minutes. Oh Lord, bring more suffering upon me that the sins of our soldiers in Vietnam be not utterly unforgiven—they are too young to be damned forever."

The prayers are as Catholic as they are Quaker, and no one will know if they were ever made, for the men who might have made them were perhaps too far out on fever and shivering and thirst to recollect, and there are places no history can reach. But if the end of the March took place in the isolation in which these last pacifists suffered naked in freezing cells, and gave up prayers for penance, then who was to say they were not saints? And who to say that the sins of America were not by their witness a tithe remitted?

WHOLE CRISIS of Christianity in America that the military heroes were on one side, and the unnamed saints on the other! Let the bugle blow. The death of America rides in on the smog. America—the land where a new kind of man was born from the idea that God was present in every man not only as compassion but as power, and so the country belonged to the people; for the will of the people—if the locks of their life could be given the art to turn—was then the will of God. Great and dangerous idea! If the locks did not turn, then the will of the people was the will of the Devil. Who by now could know where was what? Liars controlled the locks.

Brood on that country who expresses our will. She is America, once a beauty of magnificence unparalleled, now a beauty with a leprous skin. She is heavy with child—no one knows if legitimate—and languishes in a dungeon whose walls are never seen. Now the first contractions of her fearsome labor begin—it will go on: no doctor exists to tell the hour. It is only known that false labor is not likely on her now, no, she will probably give birth, and to what?—the most fearsome totalitarianism the world has ever known? Or can she, poor giant, tormented lovely girl, deliver a babe of a new world brave and tender, artful and wild? Brood on that country who expresses our will.

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On Not Being a Jew

Edward Hoagland

MY GIRLFRIEND is trying to decide if I was an Auschwitz guard in order to know how seriously to regard my attentions. She is somewhat old-fashioned, of course, a quality I respect her for, but I don't believe that I was. I believe, in other words, that the Auschwitz guards were Germans, not Gentiles. I'm Dutch, as far as that goes. One of my ancestors, a girl of sixteen, was publicly whipped in a market square in New Amsterdam for fornicating with a married man (he was fined). Another, a burgher of the same period, was murdered in a revolt of his slaves. I, for my part, was once fired from a good job for climbing into a mountain lion's cage. I took care of the row of retired MGM lions at the World Jungle Compound in California. MGM adopts as its own one particular lion every year, the year of his clinical prime, which is three to four, and then retires him to the row of cages that I took care of. There was also this mountain lion, a lady in heat who called to me at night in my boarding house across the fields with a sound like a pigeon's coo. When I crawled through her door, she went to the back of the cage, turned, and then sprang at me—I simply froze. She darted her football-sized paw into the pale bulls-eye of my face with the claws withdrawn, like a lady's muff. This was in 1953 and Trader Horn, who was the boss, happened to be passing by and fired me.

I went to school at various times with Charles Lindbergh's son, Gene Tunney's son, Nelson Rockefeller's son, David Selznick's son, Joseph Kennedy's son, the Aga Khan's son, Henri Matisse's and James Joyce's grandsons, with a Dupont, a Mellon, a Cabot, a Phipps. So why do I complain? I don't really. I had my lumps to take too, naturally. I spent a great many nights in flophouses in Boston, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and so on, making up for all this, where an alarm bell rang at nine in the morning and everyone had to be out of the building until five o'clock except for the corps of clean-up trusties. I wrote a term paper at college about one skid row, going into a couple of dozen missions, sitting on the bony benches with the bums, and eating a thin jelly sandwich after the hymns. The Catholics were more generous and easygoing but I fell for a Grace and Hope nun, a timid hillbilly soprano. At home I'd been required to take lessons in golf at the country club, but I stopped, partly in social revolt for what I'd been seeing and partly because I was on the golf course when a friend of my father's, a liquor company executive, got struck in the groin by a wild ball. He lay on a bench in the locker room as though he'd been hit by a car. The next summer I was traveling with Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, sleeping in the heap of straw in the giraffe's wagon with a number of battered fellows. When I walked in my sleep they were panic-stricken, thinking the giraffe must have gotten loose and was trampling them. The proprietor's name was Heavy and he thought that I couldn't understand English because I stuttered, so he would yell "No sleep, no sleep!" to me, as if to a Chinaman.

My stutter made my teens eventful even when they wouldn't have been otherwise. It took up to an hour for me to place a long-distance phone call, with three operators hooked in on the emergency. Storekeepers were always shoving a paper and pencil at me and then suddenly, deciding I wasn't a mute after all, running around from behind the counter to push me into the street, supposing I must be an epileptic instead. I went to a kind of Yeshiva called Deerfield Academy, with the oldest headmaster in this hemisphere. He had started the school in 1911, and was an astute power broker, hard on the faculty but a fine man, in fact. We called him the Monger—I can't remember why. He gave those of my teachers I specially liked a free hand with me and the years passed quickly enough. One of my friends there is now a traffic manager for Pan Am and I would be at a loss to say what either of us got out of the place, except for straight schooling. We were taught to pick up any papers that we found on the grounds (I don't know who dropped them, but we were all the time picking them up), and to look at the sunsets on the western hills. Sumptuous Harvard was next, where I learned that Pepys is pronounced "peeps" and studied with several extraordinary teachers, MacLeish, Wilder, Ciardi, Kazin, for instance, though I spent an inordinate amount of my hours hanging around Fish Pier and the East Boston docks and the Revere oil refinery. I went to the railroad bridge above Charlestown State

EDWARD HOAGLAND's most recent novel, *The Peacock's Tale* (McGraw-Hill), is about a contemporary Pied Piper. Mr. Hoagland teaches at City College in New York.

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Prison to be enveloped in diesel smoke, and to a red-light whorehouse which was on Copp's Hill next to the famous burying ground. I used to scuttle past that three or four times in a single evening, never able to nerve myself up to go in, until the girls gave up calling to me. As jittery as I was, I needed more rest than my roommate, so I went to bed earlier. I'd masturbate and shortly afterwards he would come in. I'd pretend to be fast asleep so as not to disturb him. He'd masturbate and go to sleep, and then I'd go to sleep.

At Harvard during my freshman year I got to know my first Jews. I tried eagerly to make friends with all that I met, as long as that idea remained plausible, and sometimes their Jewishness was the best thing about them, when, soon after, they turned into bland and buttoned-down types as the sense of being in a minority left them. I had grown up in a bedroom suburb of New York where it was next to impossible for a Jew to live. Once a real estate agent, a red-haired widow, sold one a house and was virtually bankrupted and forced out of business as a result of being ostracized. Another family somehow contrived to acquire a piece of land but the neighbors hired a bulldozer to come in and dig a trench around the property to keep the Jewish children penned in. It was a strange town. A wealthy elderly lady attempted to leave her estate on the noblest-looking of the avenues to the community for a new high school. This was prep-school territory, however, and in a perfectly open town meeting, New England-style, the proposal to accept her gift was voted down. Instead the school was built in a swamp alongside the Merritt Parkway. We at the Country Day School used "jew" as a verb gigglingly. There were two storekeepers whose names we recognized as suspect, a Mr. Rosen and Mr. Breslow. Both worked seven days in the week (a notion of endless reverberations), and when they retired the newspaper said that indeed they'd belonged to the Hebrew faith. Mr. Rosen owned a grocery store, so it was our parents who dealt with him, but Breslow, whose shop was for knicknacks and comic books, we took for our own, some of us stealing, some making the phone calls at midnight to him. I hung up without saying a word, myself, because of my stutter, and then would go to the mirror to look at my nose, which had been described by somebody as Jewish. The thought thrilled me insidiously.

These memories retain the impress on my mind that being told that it's bad for the eyes to wear rubbers inside the house does. They are luminous, permanent. "Never bargain," I was taught at home, and so if I had some object to sell, as when I got rid of my trumpet, I enjoyed bringing it to a pawnshop and bargaining diligently with a Jew. By the age of thirteen, nevertheless, I had picked up two rather remarkable labels: I was a member of the American Society of Icthyologists and Herpetologists, and a socialist. I had known, I think, only one socialist, a humorous man named Gray who lived with his many children in a thirty-room house near us. Actually, I'd never spoken to him but I knew that he was a socialist and I stuck to my guns against all argument, although called a commie at school and although every week I spent an absorbed afternoon in the company of *Time*. At Deerfield in 1948 they ran a straw poll. Dewey won something like four hundred forty-one votes. As for the other candidates—this I am clear on—Henry Wallace got eight, Truman got three, and Norman Thomas my single vote. An incredulous whoop went up when I gave it. But Deerfield was a sweet-natured, 1910 place by comparison with my hometown, where I fought many tearful, furious fights. They might be on unionization or the minimum wage, but anti-Semitism was generally sniffable in the discussion. Though Negroes were only a laughing matter, Jews were not, and quite correctly so, because in a very few years Leonard Bernstein was to be the New York Philharmonic's conductor, publicly kissing the President's wife (this was the worst), and Arthur Goldberg would have caught Kennedy's ear instead of the silly Bernie Baruch. Even the town itself would eventually fall when the developers built too many houses for the sales to be closely controlled. The population has tripled from the community I knew, and if there still aren't many outright, shameless, stark names like Cohen or Gould in the telephone book, a number of Wolfs and Millers and Whites have appeared, the ambiguous forerunners.

Meanwhile, I was out in the West fighting forest fires in a hot-shot crew, or mopping the basement of Madison Square Garden when the circus arrived in New York. Lindbergh's son, I used to hear, was paddling a kayak on Long Island Sound, camping out winter and summer. Another boy I went to school with moved up to Fairbanks, Alaska and became a world authority on grizzly bears. My college roommate, having read Thoreau, was solving our masturbatory difficulties by sleeping rolled up in a khaki blanket on the floor of the sitting room. On the other hand, my best friend at Deerfield had made the unfortunate mistake of reading a lot of late Tolstoy, had quit school to live on the Lower East Side, and was giving the shirts off his back to every addict who asked for one, until he wound up in a mental hospital. I was a bit Tolstoyan too. I lived there a little later on, watching the games of stoop-ball, the loop-the-loop trucks, the kids swimming off the piers downtown, the beatniks who lived overswept by cats with a sign in the window: "Have you ever owned a painting? —20¢." I would stop and lean down and feel the pulse of a bum who was lying unconscious on the

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sidewalk to make sure his problem was liquor. The lives led by the very poor are not more harassed than the lives which middle-class people lead. It's the crampedness, the developing paranoia which makes poor people so wretched—never getting away for a trip, never enjoying any real recreation, some new scene, new distractions. Wagner and Lehman campaigned through with apologetic, uneasy expressions and saddened voices, looking like much older men than they did uptown, looking like men who wished to retire and let someone else try to fix this. Once when I sprained my ankle I realized how dangerous the neighborhood could be, because I couldn't run. And I couldn't dash through the most depressing streets like Third Street, where the Emergency Home for men was located. Third Street was spattered with puke, littered with broken glass, but it was also where the hot dog pushcarts loaded up, and you would see the full-bearded patriarchs who did the pushing extinguish their charcoal at the end of the day in order to get some wear out of the coals tomorrow. You'd see a police car cruise slowly by and a boy on a tricycle peddling as fast as he could alongside with his arm raised. I lived next to an artisan locksmith who taxied all over the city to jobs or else worked in front of our building on a succession of cars, having the driver lock him in the trunk, so that he could pick and adjust his way free. He sometimes seemed superbly human and sometimes scarcely human at all, he worked so hard. He had a slouchy Z posture, gnarled blocky fingers, the earnest face of a clever groundhog, and a fat chest he folded his arms on when he was talking. His main tool was just his hammer, and he could have walked into any bank and begun to tap at the locks on the vault without being asked to show his credentials. He looked like an incontrovertible locksmith, an honest master.

We ALUMNI of the Lower East Side pour out stories when we get together as if we were at a college reunion, especially those of us who are in a position to go to college reunions as well. Plenty of girls were there from my sort of background, girls metamorphosed into wan social workers. And some of them went overboard and married a sandal-maker of thirty-eight or a man obsessed with clocks and axes. I was too much of a waffler to turn into a drastic Tolstoyan, and besides I'd been out in the fresh air for years on my hitchiking trips, learning the truck drivers' language of headlight flicks and benedictions conveyed with a roll of the idle hand. The first girl I kissed was an innkeeper's daughter in Pittsfield, Mass. (I wrote her a letter of self-abasement afterwards, which her mother steamed open.) The second girl lived next door to me in a hotel I stayed in in Cleveland. She was three days escaped from a coal mining town in the Appalachians where they spit on the floor of the fire hall, watching the weekly movie, and she crossed the clattering streets holding my hand as if we were wading into big breakers. We went to the Palace Theater with its chandeliers, mirrors, and thick pile rugs as if we had inherited a mighty sum.

It wasn't until my mid-twenties that I would volunteer where I was from: before, I said "near Stamford" or "from Connecticut." And all this adventuring, all this clumsy "penance" of a kind, perhaps, living in Negro hotels on upper Broadway, makes me a confident WASP nowadays without any apologies for what I am. As a matter of fact I'm not a WASP in actuality; my name is Americanized Dutch. But I'm lumped with the WASP's as cheerfully as we in that bedroom suburb would have classified an Armenian with the rest of the Jews, if we had met an Armenian. WASP is a pejorative word, a literary equivalent for Dago or Kike. W.P., for white Protestant, would certainly have legitimate meaning, but the A.S. in the middle has been added gratuitously for kicks. Everyone took to the word at first, but lately, oddly enough, the people who use it the most are themselves WASP's, either boot-me's who relish the sensation of turn-about, or else the ones like myself who say it ironically, as a Negro will say he's a nigger. Usually Jews, sensing its disparaging connotations and remembering Kike, avoid the word as somehow non-U, though they may be content that it exists.

As a WASP, anyway, I found that my tearful battles when I was thirteen on behalf of social justice or whatever it might be considered to be were wholly beside the point, to put it mildly. I saved no householder his house, and history was marching swiftly along. No doubt some of my classmates who remained placidly anti-Semitic until they were of voting age are freer of the memory of those early catechisms than I. My mother asked me recently why so many of the writers interviewed on TV appear to be Jews and I said because probably most writers are Jews. It was a new world for me, New York in the late 1950's. To be a Jew must have been like being a Yorkshireman if you were a young English writer—the vigor was said to be yours; the eyes were on you. I found I was kind of an Ibo, an ornament, in some circles, though welcome and liked. My smooth skin and glossy hair were commented on by every girlfriend. That scene from Saul Bellow's *The Victim* must have been enacted two dozen times, where someone would reach out and touch my hair in the midst of an unrelated conversation. Of course I was no victim; I was doing quite well for myself. The girls thought sex would be better with me and I thought sex would be better with them. They would try to decide what to cook for me that I might feel at home with and would end up doing

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Indian pudding, and then afterwards would marvel, practically catch their breath, at the literal cross my hair forms on my chest. It was fun and then tender and serious too, no longer mere experimentation. I did grow rather bored at being taught *chutzpah* and *mensch* and *shlepping* so regularly—no one seemed to realize that everybody was teaching these same words to people like me. Usually the teacher himself had only just learned them, but they were ethnically his and the idea supposedly was that some of their extraordinary vigor might be imparted to me if I ingested them. A person who knew how to say *chutzpah* could develop *chutzpah* even if he weren't Jewish.

I could make a good many obvious jokes about all of this, but when I spent nine months in British Columbia, where the whites are either Scottish or Irish, I would have embraced anybody who'd walked up to me whispering *chutzpah*. And in New York I was learning, meanwhile, about the slaughter of six million Jews. During the war we Gentiles had heard in detail about the Japanese concentration camps but very seldom the German camps, and, although some time along in my teens I had figured out for myself the astounding information that Christ was a Jew, this was not news you could figure out. There was a galaxy of reasons for the surge of identity or pride: maybe the Jews who had never wondered where they wanted their roots to be needed more patience than I. People who had changed their names wished that they hadn't done so. Jews my age simply were saying the word "Jew" a great deal, as if they had never said it before, trying the feel of it in their mouths. The most Protestantized Ivy League fellows began to teach me *chutzpah* and to tell me about their Jewish mothers, and everybody in New York who wasn't a Jew was marrying a Jew, just as everybody who was a Jew was marrying someone who wasn't. My father even lunched with a Jew, though he was at the ends of the earth. (He was in Yucatan sightseeing.)

One way or another it must have been as intriguing to be a Jew as it was precarious. I was walking on Broadway the afternoon when Jack Ruby shot Lee Harvey Oswald. You could breathe the hushed, gingerly triumph. One old man of the many who'd hastily rushed to the street came up to me. "Did you hear Oswald got shot?" I said yes. "Yeah, a Jew shot him!" he said gleefully.—Now they'll have to respect us! Ruby's psychotic logic, before he began to imagine horrible pogroms, is reported to have been somewhat the same. A liberal and moral people who have been belittled enough become confused, the intellectuals too, as when Israel achieved her lightning conquest and suddenly sat astraddle so much territory. She'd had to win but now she was *bigger*. Being *bigger*, and the prowess of victory, supplanted having to win, like a shrill bugling.

DURING THE 50's, at the time when I was beginning to publish, there was an historic coming-of-age of American Jewish writing. Malamud after *The Natural*, Bellow after *Dangling Man*, Kazin after *On Native Grounds* went out and wrote more than brilliantly; they wrote differently, establishing a new tradition, indeed a new establishment. To a young writer three establishments were apparent. The Southerners, leaning heavily on the greatness of Faulkner and on their own social graces, didn't especially interest me, except of course for Faulkner. *The New Yorker* paid its contributors lavish honorariums but seemed a dying institution. It had the phenomenal John Updike, shortly to leave the staff bodily and artistically, and the admirable workhorse John Cheever, and the frail, phosphorescent J. D. Salinger, who wrote as if he were chipping mica. I had grown up reading Melville, Whitman, Dreiser, Faulkner, and the next in line for me was Saul Bellow. Malamud, slightly less gifted, pulled even with him in certain short masterpieces because of the clarity and incandescence of his themes, but when Bellow had a theme going for him, as in *Henderson the Rain King* and in *Seize the Day*, I read him most avidly. We were finally introduced by the affectionate poet John Berryman, and took to each other, he becoming a friend by correspondence and a faithful reader, so that there was no question as far as I could see of this establishment being exclusive, as Gore Vidal has complained. Other than Bellow, the novelists I encountered who went out of their way to make kindly gestures to me were people like Philip Roth and Harvey Swados. The burst of concentrated enthusiasm for writers consciously Jewish couldn't help having an effect, however. I think that Cheever received less attention than he deserved for several years while he was at the height of his powers, and maybe the recognition due other writers was also delayed. For youngsters like Updike or John Barth it didn't matter as much. The push of their talent was only beginning, and a lean fox catches more rabbits.

In my own case, my first novel came out at the same time as Sam Astrakhan's *An End to Dying*, which was about immigrant family life, shifting from the Ukraine to the garment center. Both were pretty fair books, he was a friend of many of my friends, and I remember being startled and disconcerted by how completely they gave their immediate attention to him. Being reviewed well, though, I was happy and, in any event, the only bad effect of non-recognition to a writer at that stage of the game, if such is his fate, is when he can't publish what he has written while it is still important to him, a trouble I didn't generally have. I dealt with a couple of magazine editors who expressed surprise when I mentioned Bellow's liking my stuff ("You?

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He *does?*") and who turned their moo-cow eyes on me intently when I allowed as how I felt an affinity for him. "But he's so *unhappy*," they said, meaning in his role of suffering Jew.

Philip Roth in the meantime was having a problem quite the reverse. After the howl of hosanna for *Goodby Columbus*, which is a splendid book, he was able to publish practically anything he touched and would sometimes wonder whether he should. He'd done the first widely read satire of a genre of Jewish-American life, and so the false expectation was raised that each of his succeeding books must be a first. It seems to me that along with Barth and Updike he's the best writer now in his thirties we have—I think he knows the most about people. But he was penalized in the responses to *Letting Go* and *When She Was Good* for that curious, initial hosanna.* Some critics say that Henry Roth should have received an instant hosanna too, in the 1930's, for *Call It Sleep*, and regard his career with pity as blighted. I agree that his book should have got one, but writing is a spartan, bloody profession and I think if he'd had further books in him they would have come out, like Nelson Algren's did, who was just as neglected, although his first two books are nearly as gracefully written as his middle two, like Nathanael West's, like Faulkner's, who in 1944 is said to have been listed twice in the central card catalogue of the New York libraries for *A Green Bough* and *The Hamlet*.

One thing did matter to somebody like me, classified as a WASP writer. This was being told in print and occasionally in person that I and my heritage lacked vitality, that except perhaps for a residual arrogance the vitality had long ago been squeezed dry, if it had ever in fact existed in thin blood like mine. I was a museum piece, like some State-of-Mainer, because I could field no ancestor who had hawked tin pots in a Polish *shtetl*. Obviously talk like that can grow fur on a stone. If it had gone on a while longer Louis Auchincloss might have turned into a dynamo! I looked up old photographs of my greatgrandfathers in Kansas, with faces unsteady and mad as John Brown's, and recognized an equivalent rashness in me. I had a riverboat captain on the Ohio for a relative. Another guy was a naval cook in the Boxer Rebellion, who sprang ashore from his ship and was the first man shot dead.

BUT THE decade is past when even the zealous take note of who is a Jewish writer and who is not. The question has shifted way around instead to who is a writer at all. We go to the movies now, or read the lyrics on the back of the Beatles' record albums. It's certainly quicker than reading a book. There are sculptors who do their sculpting over the telephone, and we all go to poetry readings because we can catch a taste of the young fellow's personality without actually needing to bite a chunk out of his work. Allen Ginsberg is the new Carl Sandburg. Blessings on both: Sandburg was quite a stage man himself. But the concept of taking a poet's vocal abilities so seriously we've borrowed from the Russians, forgetting that they hold their readings as a dismal if defiant substitute for a free press. Hardly two years ago novelists who were having trouble with their work, the talented but chronic underperformers, were going into journalism, which was supposed to be the form of the future. Now it's the Easy Arts that are in—easy for viewer, easy for artist. Who wants to read books any more (unless it's zany pornography)? *The Graduate* replaces *Bonnie and Clyde* replaces *La Guerre Est Finie* as Book-of-the-Month. We writers are told that the novel is dead, that we're working in a dead language—time is short, people are listening to glugging guitarists and aren't going to spend it curled up with a book. I doubt that we're going to be told this for long, but if I am wrong, if we do find that our language at last is certified dead, then I think that we will draw strength from our privacy, like Isaac Bashevis Singer has, and some of us, precisely because of that privacy, will forcefully irradiate and transcend translation.

* The excitement about Roth's new stories, such as "Whacking Off," is based on the sense that he is again pioneering, when this really isn't the point. The point is that he knows about people and is a whole man. Norman Mailer's achievement with *The Steps of the Pentagon* has elated people in an equally misconstrued way, I think. They are glad to see Mailer can still write so well. Unfortunately, our most gargantuan and calamity-ridden talent seems unable to spend any more than a month or two on a book, which is not a clear cause to rejoice.

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Hebrew Between Two Worlds

Robert Alter

This "new literature" is the death-rattle of the 19th century, just as the Kabbalah and Hasidism were the death-rattle of the Dark Ages.
—M. Z. Feierberg, *Whither?*

THERE IS SOMETHING peculiarly depressing about most modern Hebrew literature written in the diaspora. The reasons for this general effect of persistent dreariness are in certain cases obvious, in others obscure, but, taken together, they can tell us a good deal about the peculiarity of the Hebrew literary enterprise of the last two centuries, and they may also suggest something about the unsettling ambiguities of Jewish existence since the Emancipation.

I would imagine that there are few people who have gone through the accepted stages of a modern Hebrew education—in Israel, in the secondary schools, in America, in the various Hebrew teachers' institutes or colleges of Jewish studies—who do not feel a certain chill in the soul at the thought of the long hours spent over the pages of Mapu, Smolenskin, Y. L. Gordon, Feierberg, Berkowitz, Fichman, and all those other Russian- or Polish-born writers of labored prose and swollen verse. There was a time when I attributed the bleakness exuded by these Hebrew texts quite simply to their deficiency as works of art, but it seems to me now that this explanation is both incomplete and imprecise.

Modern Hebrew literature is so transparently vulnerable to negative criticism and invidious comparisons that hostile commentary is often merely truistic, in some ways almost an impertinence. The first Hebrew novel, for example, Avraham Mapu's overwrought biblical romance, *The Love of Zion*, appeared just two years before *Madame Bovary*: the artistic difference between the two being roughly that between Joyce Kilmer's "Trees" and *Paradise Lost*, comparative evaluations are, to say the least, superfluous. What on the contrary strikes me now about modern Hebrew literature in Europe is the breathtaking anomaly in the very fact of its existence, and how much of substance it managed to achieve despite its unlikely circumstances. It was never more than the activity of a brave handful, somehow surviving in little coteries gathered in the interstices between the old Jewish world and modern European society, men with a kind of crazed love for a three-thousand-year-old language that no one—themselves included—spoke, breathing the air of a hypothetical culture invented in their own imaginations. Yet this spectral Hebraizing milieu was able to sustain itself uncannily through individual writers and small groups of faithful followers centered around a series of literary journals, from Moses Mendelssohn's Berlin to the Warsaw of David Frischman and the Odessa of Ahad Ha-am. By the first decade of the 20th century, the new literature had produced one poet of unquestionably major stature (Bialik), one impressively original novelist (Mendele), and a few other writers in whom at least glimmerings of genius could be discerned. By the same time, all this anomalous literary activity had helped bring about the first beginnings of a Hebrew-speaking milieu in Palestine, where Hebrew literature would eventually lead an existence, for better and for worse, *k'khol ha-goyim*, "like all the nations."

There was, then, a powerful impulse working through the Hebrew literary movement on European soil which can properly be called creative, and I shall try to describe later the distinctive nature of this Hebrew imagination of renewal that achieved so much even in the sphere of action. At one time it was common to speak of the new Hebrew creativity in ringing tones as a marvelous "rebirth" or "national renaissance." Though terms of this sort have some obvious applicability, they carry with them a good measure of ideological exaggeration or simplification, as the best of the modern Hebrew writers themselves often felt. The typical Hebrew literary text of the pre-Palestinian period is rather likely to impress the reader with a sense of terrible sterility, a quality that stands in strange contradiction to the creative élan which modern Hebrew literature is supposed to embody. This sense of sterility cannot be entirely explained by the badness of the individual works, for one often finds it, or at any rate something akin to it, in writers of real imaginative force and integrity (Feierberg, U.N. Gnessin, Y. H. Brenner, even a good deal of Mendele, Bialik, and Tchernichovsky).

Let me suggest, to begin with, that the relationship between language and reality in modern Hebrew literature gives it a general bias quite different from that of other literatures. This relation-

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ship itself amounts to an inner contradiction in modern Hebrew writing which became a source of elation or despair as it was perceived in varying lights by the writers. Modern European literatures, despite the notable exceptions of certain movements and individual writers, have characteristically tended to bring the word of written art closer to the word spoken or otherwise used in actual experience. Literary language since the early Renaissance moves toward a greater degree of specification than it had typically exercised in the past; traditional hierarchical distinctions between sublime and low styles are progressively blurred; the sound and look and feel of everyday life begin to play a new central role in serious literature. One indication of this general movement is the fact that in England, from Donne to Eliot, every important revolution in poetic diction was proclaimed as a return to "natural" speech, to the language of "real men and women."

THE INITIAL movement, on the other hand, of modern Hebrew literature was in all these regards headed in virtually the opposite direction. It is suggestive that the new Hebrew literature begins to flourish in the several decades after the French Revolution, during the very period when the novel was rapidly becoming the dominant genre in European literature. That is to say, while European writers were seeking expression more and more in a genre where language could be made to adhere with a new closeness to the rhythms and contours of familiar experience, the writers who adopted Hebrew as an instrument of secular literary expression were choosing a language that was not even a vernacular, that had scarcely any vocabulary to describe the bare physical facts of urban, industrializing societies. Most of the earlier modern Hebrew writers, moreover, preferred the lofty—and as they thought, "pure"—style of the Bible to the rabbinic Hebrew that had been in continuous written use in Jewish communities for centuries, so that the enormous distance between the language they wrote and the world they inhabited was still further magnified.

This striking contrast between Hebrew and European literature depends ultimately on opposing views of the efficacy—really, the ontological status—of literary language. One can detect among serious Western writers over the past two centuries a growing skepticism about the ability of language to embrace reality. If we can in any way engage reality through words, many writers seem to feel, some kind of violence, something unheard of, must be done to language; at any rate, the words to which we frequently turn will not be high-sounding, or fixed in formulaic order by literary tradition, but rather the words once spurned by literature because of their banality, their bizarreness, their scientific neutrality, their ugly or sordid associations, their rawness. The prominence of obscenity, for example, in the rhetoric of contemporary American fiction can be partly explained as a desperate last assault on reality with what seems to some writers the only kind of vocabulary that has not become misleading, dishonest, empty, or irrelevant. The very idea of obscenity, on the other hand, is unthinkable in Hebrew literature until its most recent Israeli phase, because this whole literary movement begins with a turning toward the sanctified verbal formulas of ancient literary tradition, in the belief that beauty of a conspicuously lofty sort is necessarily the vehicle of truth.

The *Haskala,* or Hebrew Enlightenment (roughly, from 1784 to 1881), was animated by what might be regarded as a secular survival of the classic Jewish idea that Hebrew was the language in which the world was created. As the old faith in the divine source of the Bible rapidly slipped away, the new Hebrew writers clung with paradoxical fervor to a belief in the language of the Bible as a model of aesthetic perfection and an instrument through which all the fullness of the cosmos could be apprehended. One paradigm for this touching innocence and enthusiasm of belief is a poem by Solomon Levisohn (1789-1821) entitled *Ha-M'litzah* ("Hymn to Poesy"). Now, it is true that enraptured hymns to beauty are a commonplace in European poetry during the latter 18th and early 19th centuries, but there is an important difference here. The subject of Levisohn's poem, strictly speaking, is not the heavenly muse or the divine idea of beauty, but rather poetical language. *M'litzah,* which in current Hebrew usage has become a wholly derogatory term, means "lofty language," or even more specifically, "poetic phrase." In Levisohn's poem it is the poetic word itself that spans the universe, working wonders, planting joy and aspiration in the hearts of men, melting the warrior's fierce wrath into love (this at the time of the Napoleonic wars!), even holding sway over the animal and vegetable kingdoms in some obscure hyperbolic fashion. The poetic word, in short, has become a cosmic force, not only a delegate but virtually the surrogate of God: "Like streams/ Of mighty waters bursting from/ The womb of everlasting mountains, so they [the words of poetry] sweep on/ With their vast tumultuous roar, and who/ Can withstand the surge of their might?"

This is of course turgid stuff, in the original as well as in translation, but the Hebrew does manage to achieve a certain grand ring—though always with a suspicion of hollowness—because the subject of the poem, *m'litzah,* is also its chief instrument of expression. In typical *Haskala* fashion, Levisohn's language is a pastiche, or more generously, a mosaic, of biblical phrases, and as

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such it represents a rhetorical achievement of a very peculiar sort. Such poetry is above all a reveling in the high phrases of a grand tradition, and whatever charm it held for its composers and its contemporary readers must be explained through the enthusiastic inventiveness and energy with which the poet reconstituted the familiar, affectionately recollected language of the Bible. It is hard for anyone unacquainted with this tradition to imagine the kind of delight a Hebrew reader could take in a piquant combination of a phrase from Job with one from Psalms, or in the creation of a line that would perfectly simulate the style of Isaiah without actual quotation; even the use of a rare biblical variant of a familiar word or the tricking out of a common root in an odd grammatical form could be a source of aesthetic pleasure. The Hebrew language itself was a magical thing for the early readers of modern Hebrew literature, and the art of the poet hovered somewhere between the ritualistic gestures of a high priest and the technical deftness of a prestidigitator.

IT IS HERE that the inner contradiction to which I alluded begins. The writers of the *Haskala*, and even some of their successors in more recent times, started from the assumption that the Hebrew language, if used with a full sense of aesthetic decorum, was uniquely suited to express the most fundamental truths of creation and the eternal qualities of human nature. In fact what Hebrew proved to be for the *Haskala* writers and for many of their successors was something like the all-absorbing Glass Bead Game in Herman Hesse's *Magister Ludi*—an activity supposedly a key to the nature of reality that is in practice a refined but arid intellectual pastime, an elaborate deployment of pleasing patterns within a closed system. The point is not merely that Hebrew of this sort had no vocabulary to deal with the prickly particularities of everyday experience. What is far more serious is that these tissues of lofty phrases, woven by Central- or East-European Jews in the torment and turbulence of 19th-century existence, may have expressed the adolescent idealism and bookish fantasies of the men who used them, but certainly little of their adult inner life. Or, alternately, one might say that such addiction to merely verbal values prevented many people from having much adult inner life. Literature of this sort, in other words, becomes a means of avoiding self-confrontation or honest self-exposure, a way of escaping the complexities of life through the intoxication of language.

A poem like Levisohn's "Hymn to Poesy," then, is pathetic and—despite its ecstatic mood—finally depressing, not simply because of its lack of subtlety or originality but because of its complete airlessness, and though this poem is perhaps an excessively neat illustration of the general phenomenon, a whole century of Hebrew compositions, in both verse and prose, resemble it to one degree or another in the stifling bookishness of their atmosphere, in being only marginally expressions of real human experiences, for all their earnestness. It is worth adding that the disturbing insulation of literary language from actual experience has proved to be more than a curious passing episode: the ghost of *m'litzah* still haunts many Hebrew writers, especially the older ones, and even in Israeli novelists as gifted as Haim Hazaz and S. Yizhar, verbal virtuosity too easily becomes a substitute for literary imagination. In the public rhetoric, moreover, of many Israeli political leaders and cultural dignitaries, unblushing *m'litzah* flourishes as of old, so that one is often tempted to conclude that it is easier to say absolutely nothing grandiloquently in Hebrew than in any other language.

The contradiction in the modern literary use of Hebrew that I have been describing in terms of its supposed utility as an instrument of knowledge could also be put in terms of the relationship of the language to Jewish history. The usual assumption made about the revival of the old poetic Hebrew is that it was itself an act of national renewal, a return through language to the people's life-sources located deep in the period when the nation was rooted on its own land. "Buds of Rebirth," a poem by Aaron Kaminka (1866-1950) on the early Zionist settlements, offers a logical complement to the *Haskala* conception of Hebrew; Kaminka sees the noble language of the Bible with engaging simplicity as a concrete agent in history, just as Levisohn before him imagined it as the most real cosmic force. "Who gave you being, lovely buds?" Kaminka asks, alluding to the new settlements. "Was it the verses of Isaiah buried here in the earth/ That sprang from the dust and bloomed into thousands . . ./ Or was it Ruth and the Song of Songs that left their fair phrases [*m'litzot*]/ Hidden here, to become in the magic moonlight/ Living souls?"

THIS ZIONIST notion of the power of the Hebrew language has of course a degree of plausibility wholly lacking in the earlier *Haskala* notion. It is true in a sense that the words of Isaiah, especially in their literary revival, helped move the imagination of men to create those new settlements. What enthusiasts like Kaminka failed to see is how drastically qualified such attributions of historical causation to language must be, and how terribly ambiguous the revival of an age-old tongue was for Jewish intellectuals in the throes of modernity, threatened with the loss of their own religious and cultural identity. It is the ambiguity, however, that sensitive Hebrew writers began to feel more keenly as the 19th century waned, and that

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was stressed by them with growing frequency in the early 20th century. For the adoption of Hebrew as a modern literary language eventually had the effect of polarizing outlooks on the prospect of Jewish survival. On the one hand, obviously enough, participation in the Hebrew revival could involve a sense of sharing in a real miracle of cultural resurrection, and could inspire in some individuals—one still occasionally encounters them —a loyal enthusiasm for all things Hebrew that borders on fanaticism. For a few writers, on the other hand, the commitment to Hebrew became a naked exposure to an inexorable sharp edge of despair. Having chosen to express themselves in the classic language of Jewish culture, they were located at a unique vantage-point from which to see the progressive erosion of that culture from within. At the same time, they were made painfully aware both of the lack of resonance of their Hebrew words in the larger community of Jews, and of the tenuous connection of their necessarily esoteric words with the vast world of change and dislocation in which all of Europe was caught up. They clung to the language of Jewish tradition because an authentic continuation of their identity as Jews was a first existential necessity for all of them, but what could one think of the possibilities of continuation when the very language they tried to sustain rang hollow, seemed painfully irrelevant to the post-traditional world? Often, then, the language of old and new beginnings seemed to be the language of the bitter end.

This note of forlornness in modern Hebrew literature is struck as early as Y. L. Gordon (1830-1892), the most prominent *Haskala* poet, in a plaintive piece with the self-explanatory title, "For Whom Do I Labor?" While the poet sees himself "writing poems in a forgotten language," the obscurantist older generation of Jews holds poetry in contempt, and the young people leave on the high road to assimilation; the poet, then, is led to wonder whether he may be "the last of the singers of Zion" and his audience the last Hebrew readers. History has of course laid to rest Gordon's doubts at least about the physical survival of a Hebrew audience, but his question would be asked again by Hebrew writers a generation later with a new awareness of the troubling problem of authenticity in survival.

Hebrew literature around the turn of the century, though referred to in the standard literary histories with unwitting irony as the "period of renascence," exhibits in many notable instances a distinct *fin de siècle* mood, and no one expresses that mood more poignantly than the novelist Yosef Haim Brenner. In his *Beside the Point*, a work whose title suggests the frustrated flailing-out that writing was for him, one character is moved to ask: "Look, the Holy Temple has been destroyed for all time, and what are we, its priests, doing among the ruins?" The question could serve as a somber motto for Brenner's generation of Hebrew writers, but it also has a persuasive applicability to a broad spectrum of post-traditional movements of Jewish revival, whether religious, cultural, political, or ethnic. Such movements, whatever their particular programs, have not generally been willing to admit this kind of radical, self-doubting criticism, for so much of modern Jewish life has been founded on tendentious evasions and self-congratulatory apologetics. In this regard, however, the unique strength as well as the weakness of modern Hebrew literature makes itself felt: in Hebrew, for reasons I have tried to indicate, it can be either treacherously easy or excruciatingly difficult to deceive oneself about the nature and future of Jewishness.

Paradoxically, when Hebrew literature comes of age morally and artistically around the turn of the century, it is even more depressing than it was before, though for different reasons. The literature of national rebirth at last finds its true subject, what the writers know in their bones, can hold tight in the close of their imagination, and that subject is, in a word, death. If *Haskala* phrase-making is airless because the only experience it provides is a hermetically sealed literary one, the fiction and poetry of Feierberg, Brenner, the early Y. D. Berkowitz, Bialik, and many of their contemporaries has the airlessness of the tomb because that is what the real world had become for these hyperconscious Jews. Such writers, discovering out of their own struggle to renew Hebrew that Jewish history had entered into an awful *cul-de-sac*, produced a literature in which the prevalent mood was exhaustion, the dominant imagery claustrophobic.

One symptom of this general condition is the fact that from the latter 19th century well on into the Palestinian period, there is so little persuasive youthfulness in Hebrew literature. One finds, to be sure, a kind of callow or presumptuous adolescence, which some writers, like the late Zalman Schneur, managed to sustain till their dying day, but more self-critical figures typically passed from this stage of adolescence into shriveled old age some time after their eighteenth birthday. Bialik's recurrent theme of the "theft of youth," like so much else in his work, expressed the experience of a whole culture; and time after time one sees young Hebrew poets, even those imbued with the idea of a Nietzschean revival, bemoaning the grayness of their lives, the wasting of their strength, their forlorn state in an existence which denies them love and joy.

This sensibility of decrepitude could, at its worst, be merely the occasion for personal self-pity, or, more impressively, it could be simultaneously a reflection of and percipient penetration

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into a process of dissolution immanent in Jewish life—one which the sundry Jewish apologists and romanticizers of the *shtetl* have chosen to ignore or avoid. The prose of the *Haskala* had been typically satirical, assuming that the ills of Jewish life were measurable divergences from a sane standard (that of modern Gentile Europe) and so could be corrected by a rational program of education and social reform. The criticism of Jewish life in later Hebrew writers is more profound because it does not impose extraneous standards, begins not from the bias of satire—though its effect is often grimly satiric—but out of the need to describe as faithfully as possible the way things are. Here, for example, is how Brenner, in a story called "The Jerusalemite," depicts a small-town Russian synagogue of sixty years ago:

> The windowpanes had become dark. The oven-bricks were rubbed smooth by the abrasion of generations, the bench-boards worn thin by countless sitters. The little bulging lecterns seemed to have grown heavier through long usage. The edges of the tables were splintered and pockmarked, gouged with tattooed inscriptions and jackknife carvings. The pages of the books were crowded with marginal comments and notes; they looked damp with sweat.
>
> The ceiling was lower now. The brass candelabra that were suspended from it, all their sockets befouled with tallow-drippings, had a coating of verdigris. The crooked walls were enveloped in gloom, covered with a layer of dust. Over everything there hovered an ancient spirit of sorrow, of everlasting melancholy; everything was immersed in the longings of the moribund, the yearning of the lost.

The description of physical objects overlaid in this fashion with the traces and smudges of human use—setting as a revelation of cultural style or lived experience—is of course a familiar device in 19th-century European fiction. But in writers like Balzac and Zola, such rendering of scene generally shows the imprint of human energy and will, however crude or misdirected, on the world of things. What is clear, on the other hand, in Brenner's description of the synagogue is that all energy has been sapped, all will has long since subsided into the futile longings of the almost dead. Crookedness, decay, a physical wearing out, the filthy accretions of usage—these are the recurrent themes not only of this passage but of a generation and more of Hebrew writers. The synagogue here, with its sunken ceiling, its inclining walls, its darkened windows, its atmosphere of heaviness, is a claustrophobic intimation of the grave. The compulsive redoubling of almost every image and phrase (an effect more pronounced in the original than in my translation) bespeaks both the emphasis of Brenner's feeling and his impulse to reproduce in prose something of the slow march of distichs and tristichs, single and double parallelisms, that distinguishes the biblical elegy.

This kind of writing is all the more disturbing because it is *not* satiric. Brenner finds in the much-extolled stronghold of Jewish faith only the abode of the dying and of death itself, but he also knows that it is his soul's intimate world, the one he is condemned to depict in painstaking detail with a sort of loving hatred. For he is equally aware that the new world (which in effect he has already joined) outside the tumbledown walls of the synagogue spells another kind of death for him—the denial of his ultimate identity, the betrayal of his people's history. "I have lost my old world," complains the hero of Feierberg's *Whither?* (1896), "and a new world I have not found." This general consciousness of anguished contradiction, of a lack of viable alternatives, attains its most intense, unflinching expression in the fiction of Brenner, where the protagonists desperately grope along the walls of their moral prison for a "way out" (the title of one memorable story) and usually discover that the only route of escape is through madness or suicide.

THE GREATEST Hebrew writer of the pre-Palestinian period responded to his own terrible vision of death within and death without in another way—through silence. Between 1900 and 1905 Haim Nahman Bialik had produced a sustained series of brilliant poems, both short lyric pieces and longer narrative verse, which in its concentrated achievement of genius recalls the creative outpouring of Keats in the months when he wrote all his odes. In a matter of three or four years, Bialik managed, I would say, to write more great Hebrew poetry than all the Hebrew poets combined since the death of Judah Halevi in the 12th century. By 1907, however, the excitement had faded, Bialik's mood was saddened or embittered, and his poetic production had noticeably slowed; over the next nine years it became a trickle; and after 1916, when he was still only forty-three, he virtually stopped writing serious poetry with the exception of a solitary piece every few years when some experience particularly moved him. The paradoxical aspect of all this, what has made it a crux of criticism, is the fact that the poems written during the years of Bialik's "silence," whether we date it from 1916 or earlier, are palpably works of genius, so that his decision to stop writing cannot be attributed to a waning of powers. Bialik more than once alluded to his own poetic activity as the wielding of an axe by a hewer of wood, but what role, he began to wonder, would be played by poetry so conceived if the cleaving blade met only the soft insidious yielding of rottenness and decay? In other words, how could a poetry that spoke in the ringing tones of a tradition sustain itself when the tradition was dying, its divine authentication no longer believed, when the people who were the

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poet's audience gave only the most dubious evidence of spiritual, moral, or intellectual life?

Bialik lucidly perceived these reasons for his own eventual silence as early as 1904 in a poem called *Davar* ("Word," but in the sense here of "prophetic burden"), one of the first in what might be called his negative-prophetic mode. The poem begins with the shards of a broken altar among which the people scavenge like nasty rodents; the poet is then enjoined to pound his useless hammer into a shovel to dig a grave, after which the poem turns into a verbal symphony of negatives—the lines bristle with "not's" and "no's," with "emptiness," "impotence," "nothingness," and, especially, "chaos." "Let your word be bitter as death," the poet-prophet is commanded, "let it be death itself—/ We shall hear it that we may know." The sardonic concluding lines of *Davar* summarize with biting succinctness the whole contradiction I have been describing between Hebrew literature as a mode of national renascence and as a means of intimate, unpitying knowledge of the imminent end:

Why should we fear death—when his angel rides
our shoulders
His bit between our teeth?
So with a cry of rebirth on our lips, with the
cheering of players
We skip to the grave.

After such words, little remains before the rest is silence.

THE TROUBLE WITH this entire picture of modern Hebrew literature is that it is misleadingly incomplete. Though it is true that the most honest and probing Hebrew works of this period often give voice to a stark, dead-end despair that is distinctive even in the rich gallery of despairs of modern Western literature, one can also find, sometimes in convincingly achieved writing, an antithetical imagination and an opposed set of themes. As the course of history in the past half-century has shown, the national renewal proclaimed by the new literature was not entirely illusory, however we may seek to qualify the concept of renewal or stress its problematic aspects: not only has a viable Jewish state been created, but within it flourishes a modern Hebrew culture that has powerful though often deeply ambiguous ties with the Jewish past. It is hardly surprising that the intimations of a genuine renewal, whether personal or national, should on occasion make themselves persuasively felt in imaginative works in Hebrew. This is the bright underside of the dark paradox we have been considering: if Hebrew literature in general touches a nadir of bleak depression remarkable among modern literatures, there are also impressive Hebrew works that preserve a mood of untrammeled joy and exuberance of a sort one scarcely finds in serious European writing since the Romantic movement.

Understandably, these joyous notes are sounded more often, more resonantly, in poetry than in prose, for the engagement of fiction in the description of actual milieux and institutions typically led to repeated confrontations with the sundry social pathologies of East-European Jewry. It is also worth noting that the poets who achieve the most convincing kind of joyfulness in their art are generally those who are also gripped by the characteristic Hebrew imagination of death and dissolution. The same Tchernichovsky who denounced his people as "walking corpses, the rot of human seed," could evoke them vividly in his long narrative idylls in all the teeming vitality of their life on the Russian steppes, all the bustling health of their birth and growth and marriage, their workdays and seasons of rejoicing. And Bialik, in the same period from 1900 to 1905 when he first struck the apocalyptic note of *Davar,* in the shaddow of pogroms and the collapse of the old world-order, produced his remarkable series of poems on the theme of light, which convey a sense of sustained elation perhaps unmatched in the poetry of this century.

In some cases, however, elation came at a cost, or rather was the result of a self-conscious decision. Much Hebrew writing of the earlier 20th century is not vital but vitalistic—which is virtually the opposite, the product not of an immediate intuition but of a willed choice to identify with a presumed flow of life-energy in the natural world and in mankind. One senses, for example, in some though not all of the paganizing poems of Tchernichovsky and Schneur that the primitive vitality of the ancient cults is not imaginatively felt, only programmatically declared as an ideological challenge to historical Judaism. A more complicated, perhaps more instructive, instance of this same ambiguity is the ecstatic poetry of the Palestinian pioneer period written by Avraham Shlonsky in the 20's. The excitement of these poems seems quite genuine, and in some of the short pieces it is beautifully realized, but much of the imagery looks forcibly devised to burst the shell of musty Jewish bookishness. Thus the earth is a pregnant black mare, the mountains of Gilboa are camels with bulging breasts (not udders) giving suck to the fields of Jezreel below, the June sun licks the wild-ass's skin which is the land, and so forth. The muscles of poetic invention visibly strain and bulge in such imagery; this may work to *épater les juifs,* but it often seems the contrived equivalent of vitality rather than the direct experience of it. Shlonsky's poetry throughout his career has tended to vacillate between poles of joy and despair, and he is paradigmatically the Hebrew poet when, in the volume of verse after the Gilboa poems, he confesses that the happier tones

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seem perversely to elude him: "I too sought the drum for a song of exultation/ But the craftsman made me a harp of weeping-willow wood."

What are probably the most fully realized moments of joy in this literature come in Bialik's poems of light, and even in them ecstasy can overtake the speaker only through extraordinary means. Here, for example, are the first lines in the concluding verse-paragraph of "Morning Creatures":

O come to me, gleaming ones, pure morning creatures,
Come under my brilliant white sheet!
There let us wallow, let us wrestle till noontide;
Dance over my skin and soft flesh.

"Come to," or "come into" (*bo el*) is the standard biblical idiom for sexual entry, and the lines that follow these, abounding in images of penetration and moving toward an ecstatic climax, make it still clearer that there is a play on the sexual meaning of the term. What is curious is that the male poet assumes the female role, eagerly waiting in bed for the morning light to caress his "soft flesh," to flood into him and possess him. This moment in Bialik is one remove from John Donne's prayer to be raped by God in the famous sonnet that begins, "Batter my heart, three-personed God." I mention Donne because of the instructive difference as well as the similarity. Donne's desire to be assaulted, violated, by a powerful male God bears witness to an agonized psychological distance from God, a desperate need to feel the impossible immediacy of the divine presence; it is just this tormented sense of separation that gives all of Donne's religious poems their peculiar taut energy. In Bialik, too, there is an inner distance from the sweet light he hungers for in his more typical poetic visions of grim deprivation. This, I would assume, is ultimately why both in "Morning Creatures" and in the longer poem "Splendor" he adopts the passivity of the woman's sexual role: brightness must take him by surprise, envelop him, overwhelm him. In contrast, however, to Donne's religious verse, the distance is crossed; the speaker in Bialik's poems does not pray to be raped by light but rather welcomes its entrance as he is suddenly, exquisitely inundated. The poetry here, as the ripe sensuality of its language attests, is an experience of consummated rapture, in both the physical and the emotional sense.

THE ISRAELI critic Dov Sadan has shrewdly observed that much of Bialik's poetry evokes in varying ways a single archetypal scene: a large, dark space in the midst of which is a candle, flickering and casting shadows. The candle-flame in the darkness, Sadan suggests, is first the actual frail light Bialik knew as a boy in study-house and yeshiva, where he followed the traditional discipline of learning; then it is the altar-flame of the long-destroyed temple, a central memory in classic Jewish consciousness at once historical and mythical; and, finally, as the poet draws near to the light, plunges into it, it becomes a wholly mythical substance, the "hidden light" of primal unity at life's beginnings to which Bialik's poetry—in this respect recalling Wordsworth's—strives to return. The same image of flickering light in sepulchral darkness appears elsewhere in Hebrew literary works of the period, but what is more important is that it is such an apt emblem of the Hebrew literary enterprise in modern Europe. There is, moreover, a nice correspondence between this representative image of Hebrew literature and the actual state of Jewish existence since the Emancipation—an existence that has been precarious, dubious, often hiding the face of dissolution beneath the mask of revival, but which also has afforded moments of genuine vitality, surprising explosions of light. The distinctive value of this new literature, then, which tries to refashion the language of tradition for a post-traditional world, is that it serves as a faithful instrument for taking the full measure of threatened extinction, and yet it can register sudden intimations of immortality, imaginative tracings of a bright renewal still possible to achieve.

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Fantasy & Circumstance

John Thompson

REALITY, we often hear today, has become so fantastic that only an art of fantasy can hope to imitate it, just as we hear that if those who are running the affairs of this world are sane, then who would not choose madness? But real madness does not lie around to be chosen, perhaps not any more than does love, which we are also often urged to elect. And as for art, fantasy is not to be had so easily either. The Modern movement in poetry, drama, and painting exhausted itself in fantasy, using up in one or two generations all the supernatural creatures it had revived out of the unconscious where the 18th century had buried them.

Except in fiction: there the "experimental," the fantastic, never became entirely dominant, and perhaps for that reason fantasy reasserts its power from time to time, as, say, the work of William Burroughs demonstrates. The basic conventions of fiction, though, are still those we recognize as being much like what we call "reality." As Auden once said, even the apocalyptic Nathanael West in all his novels but one "adopted the conventions of social narrative; his characters need real food, drink, and money, and live in recognizable places like New York or Hollywood."

But that was ten years ago, and I am not about to say that New York or Hollywood—or Washington, D.C.—are still recognizable by the conventions of social narrative. You can make up your own list of the hideous and the outlandish from the morning paper any day. The news we see and read every day may really give us the license to project in art the wildest absurdities we can. Yet I wonder, if we do agree that reality today is at least extreme, if not indeed beyond the extremities of past social conventions, even so, I wonder whether or not the novelists have been overconfident in assuming that they can match in the processes of their now unleashed imaginations all those weird events the social soul of America has finally manifested. It may take more than simply letting yourself go.

If the world is so unpredictably various, and if defensibly rational public acts can lead to such insane conclusions in action, how can mere imagination match that unpredictability, or mere madness the bizarre performances of our social engine?

THESE REMARKS are more directly relevant to the other books I shall discuss than they are to the new novel by Jeremy Larner, *The Answer*,* but they have something to do with the assumptions of this book as well as with its manner; and the book deals directly with one of the most troubling of all current symptoms of dissatisfaction with the reality of our society, that of the new culture of drugs among the young. The "answer" of the title is "the Answer Drug," an hallucinatory LSD-like potion that solves all problems for its users. The hero who seeks the answer is Alex Randall, twenty years old, son of a self-made Kansas businessman, and a student at an unnamed Harvard-like university. Most of the story takes place in a few days of February 1964. Randall has unsatisfactory encounters with his girl and with his father, smokes marijuana with his friends, discovers his roommate berserk under the influence of the "answer drug," and rushes off to the mansion of Dr. Magus Tyrtan, prophet of spiritual salvation through drugs, seeking an antidote for the roommate. Instead of getting the antidote, Randall stays in the mansion for several days, and his adventures in this elaborate psychedelic castle make up most of the story. Finally, Randall takes the drug himself, experiences long hallucinations, then flees, to find that his roommate has hung himself. Thereupon, at last, Randall attacks Tyrtan, but ineffectually. A brief epilogue written as from 1980 disposes of the various characters, and of the drug itself; the young by this time "have gone on to something new, and scorn their druggie parents."

The story, then, deals very much with current headlines, with the recognizable experience of one highly-publicized group of young people today. (Vietnam, the draft, peace movements, do not really figure in the story; in the epilogue, the war has simply disappeared.) Yet it is also clear that the story is meant to take on more general overtones: Harvard, but not exactly Harvard; LSD, but not exactly LSD; the acid guru, but not exactly he. There is indeed today an establishment presumably much like Dr. Magus's "Heavenly House"; but in *The Answer*, this mansion is also the Castle of the Eternal Quest that young men have always undertaken. Randall is any knight who sets out to seek the Dragon, the King, the Maiden, the Grail, or whatever it is that holds salvation. For many readers, this dimension of myth, fable, or psychology may well enhance the story greatly. Certainly it serves the author by placing within the bounds of judgment an experience he seems otherwise to have some difficulties in estimating. Yet the manner of the story, presenting, as it seems to me, those difficulties, vibrates most uneasily within the limits of the fable about youth's illusions.

IT IS the duty of Randall, the hero, to tell the story in the first person. At once, in the opening pages, he establishes himself as clever, perceptive, reflective, very gifted verbally, and at the same time he is so obsessed that he is sub-

JOHN THOMPSON *reviews contemporary fiction regularly in these pages. Mr. Thompson teaches English at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Long Island.*

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ject to actual hallucinations. Making love, he suddenly sees "a little man in a waistcoat standing in a dark corner near the kitchenette." This little man—some figure of the hero's Oedipal conflict that causes him a sexual insufficiency?—appears again from time to time, a modest and scarcely examined bit of mental *bizarrerie*. The story goes on in brilliant patches of perception and reaction, very much in the modern manner of interior narrations that seems now to dominate American fiction: half-poetic, half-parodic, every verb and adjective charged with energy.

> Renée came on so hip herself—if only she really were! If she were hard as a rubber ball, like the one and only Blonde Star! (And yet inside the Blonde Star quivers, quivers, for anything tasty and true.)

Relating the experiences he has had under the influence of marijuana, Randall seems to reproduce the effect of the drug as the language condenses and intensifies, dropping articles and connectives and logical syntax.

> New snow feathers on the pocked ice shingles; up from the streetwell comes honking of traffic slide over in the square. Below, prancing dappled through streetlights, a horse appears, mounted by blobular man with cap in the middle. . . . I bellyflop on the windowsill, in mellow jumpiness of elevation. . . .

Finally, after the full treatment of stroboscopic lights, mandalas, mirrored rooms, fried rice, entranced females, skull-splitting music, and the wisdom of Dr. Magus ("Crumbling, the whole verbal edifice of Western history . . . . Forget your mind . . . merge and flow. . . ."), Randall takes the drug, and for what seems much too long a time he presents the demented sights and sounds of his excursion. These are enough to discourage the use of aspirin.

IN THESE passages, purposefully, the author displays the poverty of pure fantasy, the boring, repetitive emptiness of induced inspiration. At one high point, Randall reproduces in his ecstasy what he takes for a marvelous vision. It is an idiotic parody of half-remembered Shelley.

> In the helpless sky of my brain there soared a little chocolate bird with dark glasses, looping high and wailing. . . . Soon the roof of Heaven was criss-crossed with the hard bright crystal tracing of one lone bird. . . . How I wondered what white thoughts were his as he shot like an arrow across the blue deep! . . . Teach me, I cried, half that gladness that your brain must know—let me hang it all together in a spaced-out, burning flow—then all these cats would listen—and everybody would know!

The Quest, then, is only a snipe hunt, the Dragon cowardly, Merlin a faker, the enchanted Maiden catatonic. Yet the Grail contains real poison. And what of the hero? How could he be such a fool as to embark on this journey? The myth, of course, requires no motive: this is what young knights do. But the settings, mythical only in their undenomination; the time, February 1964; the fierce perception and language of the narrator; these demand more. The young man is neither desperate enough, nor the tempter sufficiently charming, for the fall to be convincing. The author, and thus his narrator, finds the trappings of psychedelia ridiculous and tawdry. Then what is their appeal? This is an ambitious, clever, and brilliantly conceived novel, but it does not finally present the questions that must lie, urgently if however falsely, behind the search for the Answer.

CURLING, BY ROBERT BOLES,* is a very strange novel but not all fantastic. In that current fashion of interior monologue, it records the observations, thoughts, and memories of a rich and well-educated young man over the period of one weekend, as he leaves his job as a structural engineer, visits friends, walks the streets of Boston, goes to his house on Cape Cod, attends a drunken party, and finally flees to New Bedford where, still dressed in his tuxedo, he gets into a fatal brawl outside a waterfront saloon. Like the heroes of practically all novels for the last hundred years, he feels himself no part of the world he seems to be wandering through.

> I was about to leave Boston. The City was a place passed through, where lives go about, where people in buses and trains and cars felt the pleasant edge of anonymity because here there were judges, a governor, men to run grocery stores and cleaning establishments, priests, members of orchestras, policemen, firemen, mechanics, all and more, all faced with the same ridiculous proposition, and through the tinted glass of the bus it would seem a capsule suspended and static.

The strange thing is that this young man, who wanders about like Stephen Dedalus or Larner's Alex Randall, full of daydreams, memories, thoughts of the music of Fauré and the painting of Paul Klee, is a Negro. Finally neither the hero nor, as it seems to me, the author himself, knows quite what to make of this.

We learn the story of the hero—Chelsea Meredith Burlingame—in sudden flashes, among the sudden and shifting snapshots and illuminations of his observations, fantasies, and memories. It would not do to recount that story, since learning it is part of the suspense of the book. Like the observations of the present moment in the book, the story of the hero's strange life seems real, as arbitrary as reality itself, and quite unresponsive to analysis.

Being extremely intelligent and self-conscious, the hero is made aware of the method of his own mind. In his mental notebook he records his sense of rejection by all those he has loved, and almost at once, his own refusal to think about this. He wants only to see what lies before him, which he does in extraordinarily sharp detail. Obsessed with the mouth of the girl he loves, rather than with what she is saying to him, he says that "her lips moved with the surety of men's fingers tying shoelaces."

Just so, the experiences of the hero with white racists, his pain and anger, occur in flashes. In his strange situation, he might well forget he is a Negro: there is very little in the world he observes or in the people he moves among to remind him of this, and since he will not generalize about it, since he will not think about it, it can

* Houghton Mifflin, 259 pp., $4.50.

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appear to the reader, as to the hero, only when something happens that makes it clear.

But this is not an easy book, it is complex and rich, and as I said, strange and real, as novels should be. Perhaps we are meant to understand that it is exactly the fact that there is nothing but his skin to make this man a Negro that drives him finally to his extremity of action, and even to the extremity of his final thought, which is recorded like this: "Life is small and silent, is, at times, a composition recognized and left to rest."

NOW TO RETURN to those remarks with which I began, about the bizarre nature of our lives today, and the attempt by writers to represent this in fantasy; let me note rather briefly two additions to the popular genre of black humor, the literary equivalent of the sick joke and Pop Art. *Mother is a Country,* by Kathrin Perutz,* and *Superworm,* by George Deaux,† both find that madness, destruction, suicide, and murder are funny. Both proceed on the assumption that such definitively American institutions as the barber shop and the supermarket are not only enough to drive anyone crazy, but that anyone who isn't driven crazy by them is *really* crazy. Like Larner's *The Answer,* like so many of the current black-humor books, they are produced by university wits, professors full or part-time, and thus naturally enough their stories center on academia, on teachers and on the young. (Miss Perutz is academic *ex-officio,* as it were, by virtue of marriage.) The teachers are ineffectual, frustrated daydreamers, or, in their brighter moments, actually deluded maniacs who act out their fantasies. The students are blankly complaisant sexual objects or, sometimes, moralists outraged by the compromises of their teachers, who are over thirty.

Mr. Deaux's professor, an ungifted and unhonored Herzog, writes letters of protest to the President, to Senators, to God; loves his wife; has two children whose names he can't remember; and from time to time undergoes psychotic epi-

* Harcourt, Brace & World, 154 pp., $3.95.

† Simon and Schuster, 252 pp., $3.50.

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sodes in which he acts out his aggressive fantasies. In the episode of this book, he disguises himself for his farcical adventures in dyed long underwear emblazoned with the mark of Superworm. "Respectable folk are a superstitious, cowardly lot, so my disguise must be able to strike terror into their hearts. I must be a creature of the earth, black, slimy, a—a. . . ." A Worm.

Miss Perutz's professor is quite the opposite, a lady professor, easily, scornfully successful, in her early thirties, dark-eyed, "and her bosom almost fabled in possessing those proportions reserved for earthy heroines in novels by male authors." Energetically promiscuous as she is, she cannot keep up with her own sexual fantasies, and is done in at last by the discrepancies of dream and reality. Pushing her on the way is the turned worm of this book, a supermarket clerk with a penchant for suicide. In both these novels, there are adventures among young motorcyclists and hipsters, farcical always, but dangerous and bloody enough too. Entrails and gore abound, amid the even more dreadful sterile plastic packages of modern America. Sex abounds, in unveiled words; Miss Perutz's pervading sexual scenes are farcically perverse, farcically literal. Should we say of these worms who turn, "There but for the grace of God go I," or, should we say, "There go I," or should we be saying, are these authors saying, "There go the poor little Americans"? Both authors take care to remind us that there is a reality out there which nearly outdoes their wildest farce, George Deaux with a motto of absurd and horrible newspaper clippings such as we find in the paper every day, Kathrin Perutz with her farcical scholarly footnotes, a farce compounded by the fact that most of them are, as they say in the trade, from secondary sources. Both books end with a sudden dilation of the lens into a wide-screen shot of the whole country, thus showing us where this farce belongs: everywhere in America.

I have found these books, and many like them, very bright in performance, surely the work of serious and gifted writers, yet less funny than they try to be. One reason for this, quite aside from the fact that comic invention is really very rare in literature, not at all something anyone can do if he only frees himself of his inhibitions, is the predilection of these writers for that favorite modern device, the internal monologue. Recall how brief are the inward musings of Basil Seal or Lucky Jim—or of Bertie Wooster—and how little they are given to prolonged and conscious suffering. Maybe it is even significant that Basil and Jim, and even Bertie, given Jeeves, are in their own awkward ways devilishly effective. The heroes of American black humor tend to be feeble and ludicrous, infinitely less gifted than their authors. Why make your case against something you hate in the name of a loser? But the uncertainties and ineffectualities of the heroes now seem to me a reflection of some deeper uncertainties of the accomplished authors themselves. These writers can cleverly damn both the assailant and the thing assailed, in flights of fantasy, but they seem to have been unable to imagine any alternatives. These are not really moral farces. They proceed from no real stand. And perhaps unfairly, I charge to the account of the frustration of these authors the prevalence in their works of cruelty, dirt, and degradation. There is more of it than for me, at least, inspires spontaneous laughter. Not that they cannot find plenty of newspaper clippings to justify these presences too.

FOR RELIEF now, something quite different, something which may, if these satiric authors wish, betray their critic; or which may, if the idea is not pushed too far, suggest some of the things that are lacking in that bleak American world they describe with such loathing. *The Three Suitors,* by Richard Jones,* a Welsh poet, is an old-fashioned novel, totally unoriginal in manner, and even Victorian in its backward country setting, its plot involving a hoard of manuscripts sought (or unsought) by three different agents who are the three "suitors," and matters of land inheritance, and young lovers, and an illegitimate daughter; and a thick tangle of family relations and reveyears old, flighty, passionate, foolish, and completely real. The story is never sentimental but always charming, always surprising, and continually amusing. No amount of fantasy could invent these deep and complicated circumstances of life where they did not in fact exist, and perhaps no flights of imagination however untrammeled and uncensored can substitute for them once they are gone. How, indeed, to make an imitation of a life as frantic and empty as ours. . . . Still, there are connections even across the steep Atlantic, and something, if only a knowledge of what we are missing, may yet reach us in our wilderness. The hoard of papers goes at last for a good price to give young scholars "a real feeling and appreciation of the past" in the research library of Matthieson College, Pennsylvania, which is, I believe, where so many of our mordant university wits are employed between fellowships.

* Little, Brown and Company, 312 pp., $6.00.

Theater Chronicle

Jack Richardson

THE POSITIVE THING one may say about Arthur Miller's new play, *The Price,* is that it is relatively free from extraneous significance. There are no Forms from Greek tragedy making an embarrassing buttress for an immigrant melodrama *(A View from the Bridge)*; World War II is not used to adumbrate a great deal of rhetoric on moral responsibility *(Incident at Vichy)*; images of Nazi concentration camps are not flashed into sight to solemnify a meretricious autobiography *(After the Fall)*. Not to see a Miller play being tortured into profundity does indeed produce a certain amount of pleasure, but finally it is a negative one. By coming on stage in simple dress, *The Price* does not actually offend, but it does numb one into deep critical apathy with its little bursts of emotion, its contrived in-

JACK RICHARDSON *is* COMMENTARY'S *regular theater critic. Mr. Richardson reviewed* Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead *and* Scuba Duba *in the December 1967 issue.*

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terfamilial dialectics, and its vague musings on time past and passing. The main objection to Miller's earlier plays was that they fought *against* themselves in a vain effort to make the mundane appear, through straining language and stylistic pilferage, something of profound and universal depth. (One may except *Death of a Salesman* from this charge, for there Miller kept his notions about tragic figures and ecumenical heroes contained in an essay about the play and succeeded in allowing his audience to be as sentimental as it liked about Willy Loman without its being pressed into the service of the author's social theories of art.) The objection to *The Price,* however, is that it pretends to nothing, that it simply throws up a few people for our perusal, tiny characters that puff and struggle through a problem they never really embody but only act out.

The play begins in a setting of stored furniture awaiting an appraiser. Victor Franz, policeman, about to retire at the age of fifty, enters. After several minutes of nostalgic solitude his wife, Esther, joins him. She is discontented. With some twenty years as a policeman's wife behind her, she now wants something better for both of them. There are some heavy innuendoes that perhaps Victor has let his life slip by because he stayed on to help his father (ruined in the Depression) instead of leaving and going on to college like his brother. But, then, he loved the old man, and he has accepted his choice. Brother Walter, on the other hand, while becoming a successful surgeon, seems to be a bastard. He has not spoken to or seen Victor and Esther for sixteen years, but now, since the family furniture is being sold, the time is ripe for reunion.

The confrontation begins: Walter, who has not found happiness in worldly success (no one ever does in such dramas), and who has gone through a breakdown and a divorce, arrives bent on making amends to his brother with offers of money and a job. Esther is gleeful, but Victor, the son who stayed to do his duty, is not about to let his sibling off that easily. A clash ensues in which successful brother admits that he *is* something of a bastard and good brother is forced to admit, through plot revelations too tedious to go into, that he might have remained at his filial post and in the police force from fear of risking the warm comfort of self-sacrifice. The brothers part angrily —both, you see, having paid the price for their decisions.

I would like to leave the précis of the play at this, but there is one more character who weaves in and out of the action. He is a sort of Yiddish *raisonneur* named Gregory Solomon, the man who comes to appraise and buy the Franz furniture. He is equipped with a thick accent that occasions laughter when he says "Give me, please, a Hershey?" and a number of warm, homely apothegms indicative of deep understanding and a full life. He has suffered much, is zestful at the age of ninety, is good for some twenty-five laughs a night, and is, of course, completely incredible.

Now, WHAT is one to make of the Franz family? Little, I imagine, except that they have demonstrated an Arthur Miller notion with a great deal of sound and fury. Of the real fabric of their lives we know very little. Of course, they are an unexceptional trio, but it has always been Miller's and his partisans' contention that one need not be traditionally extraordinary to reveal formidable truths about life. But can inarticulate squabbling become art simply because it fits an ingenuous notion of character consistency? I think after what Chekhov and the latter plays of O'Neill have taught us we can put to rest that argument. Both these writers show that if you probe far enough you can find an articulation in all human life and that this can be brought to the stage without conjuring up a false dramatic coherence. But Miller doesn't probe, he simply provides a dilemma and some epitaphs for his characters in a language that is never precise or startling. A line like, "When I think of my mother, I can't remember her face," is all we get from what some consider a major playwright as he shows us the terror of a man suddenly aware of time. The rest—except for Solomon's one-liners—recedes into that gray area of ordinary speech handled by a writer who doesn't grasp the revelations and rhythms hidden in it. What comes out is a heavy dosage of television screeching which pushes on and on until one is rendered oblivious to the meaning of all language and left only with the author's heavy insistence that a meaningful question about life is being asked.

Underlying such plays as *The Price,* of course, is the simplistic theory of realism on stage. The Franzes are still getting by on the demands of the Ibsens and Hauptmanns that such lives deserve our attention. Well, they certainly have gotten it from those whose notion of reality consists of the comfortably recognizable, but I have always wondered why such honest specimens always turn up in the drama precisely at a moment of illuminating crisis in their lives, their psychology neatly displayed and their actions caught in the aspic of some socio-ethical problem. If life only presented us with such snug closets of experience we all might fashion plays in this mode. We could look

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about and muse on our neighbors: "Those Joneses, dull as a wet afternoon most of the time, but catch them in a crisis—well, you'd be surprised to discover the things that come out about life and death which make them tolerable dramatic." Such fatuousness would leave one stunned in a conversation; when it forms the aesthetics of a play, it is no less stupefying.

The production is a good specimen of the nervous hit-and-run tactics of a company not quite certain what all the exclamation points in the script are about. The actors laugh, shout, and weep in sequence with that overexuberance born of the suspicion that the sequence might very well be reversed. When not jumping to some crescendo marked on the score, they wander about and look wistfully at furniture. Pat Hingle, as the brother-who-sacrificed, gives us his old big-bear, jocular clumsiness routine which gets him through the play unscarred except for the moments he's supposed to pretend something serious has happened. Arthur Kennedy brought out a clear intelligent characterization of a confused actor, and this, along with one or two angry shouts, brought him applause when he finally exited. Kate Reid kept herself very erect on stage and frowned occasionally at the goings-on between the Franz brothers. This is all I can really say about the performers. It seems that they were all professional enough not to call too much attention to the play by trying to act their roles, and they endured stoically the long directorial pauses and uncalled-for outbursts of passion. As for Harold Gary, who played nice-old-man Gregory Solomon, he will steal the show every night if the Irgun doesn't get to him first.

I HAVE A very knowledgeable friend who has little good to say about modern drama but who loves to watch actors at work. He has often spoken to me nostalgically about the postwar days of the English theater, before the Osborne/Pinter revolution, when, except for clasics, plays were inoffensive trifles meant only to allow a great actor to get on stage and have a high old time. Naturally, watching a bad play for the sake of a virtuoso performance, and completely enjoying the experience, struck me as sinister and morbid. Now, however, after seeing Albert Finney in *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* I can understand my friend completely, for while this play is not really a trifle, it could hardly sustain itself at its present level of excitement and humor without Finney. His performance is one of those sustained bits of artistry which is delightful to watch for its own sake, and only those who demand constant Utopia would ask that it be affixed to something of equal value.

The play, written by Peter Nichols, is a comedy about a couple who have a spastic and epileptic child and who finally separate because of their different commitments to her. Is such the stuff of humor? Well, we all know comedy has extended its boundaries, and, indeed, *Joe Egg* is often a funny play, especially when it deals with the absurd explanations and reactions of society when nature has been capriciously cruel. It is also in a way asking somewhat the same question as *The Price* about the proper investment of love, but, gratefully, asking it in a much less strident voice. Nichols is an intelligent writer and often a graceful one, but the play actually never does become too much more than a curiosity, and the last act, in which the father tries, through an incredible series of sins of omission, to kill his daughter, becomes unintentionally farcical. Still, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* is a long way from being a painful necessary condition for watching a fine actor at work, and though it labors a little hard to keep all self-pity out of the proceedings, it does make any discomfort we feel about the anomalous in life seem laughable.

But back to Finney. He walks on stage—slouched, dressed in a rumpled coat and trousers, tie askew—and starts grumbling at the audience. He is really addressing a classroom of boys, for the character he portrays is a schoolteacher. He leans forward slightly. His eyes are set wide apart, encompassing as much as physically possible, for he knows the danger of having a blind spot with this class. His voice chastises in the bored, perfunctory way of one who is weary with command and his body twitches with the same desire as his students' to be out of that classroom. No Mr. Chips perhaps, but the perfect depiction of a bright young teacher caught among the dullards of public education. In two minutes we are given a Welfare-State *Browning Version*.

The first time I saw Finney on stage, in Osborne's *Luther*, one of the things that impressed me about his performance was that he managed to become an old man simply by donning a cowl and letting his head droop to one side. In *Joe Egg*, after trying to cause his daughter's death, he just sits amid the frantic commotion of those trying to save her, slumped in a raincoat, a man who has made an irrevocable decision and can do nothing but let the consequences wash over him. It is not the simplicity of these choices that are so effective; it is, rather, that they are all that is needed. Finney does so much with a character, and is so ready to involve his entire skill should a small incident call for it, that when he measures carefully he has earned our belief that he is right to be parsimonious. Other actors would have to do more at crucial moments because they have done less earlier. But Finney never stints. In fact I have hardly ever seen so much purposeful energy on a stage. He provides moment after moment of precise information about his character—moments spanning the flourishes of song and dance to the silences of thought. One looks at him and what is apparently seen is a tall, loose-jointed young man with a round pasty face that in no way seems particularly expressive. From this it is hardly believable so much life is erupting. Still, of course, I said apparently seen, because it would not suprise me if Finney turned out to be short and swarthy in reality, but then reality is never the place to put one's favorite actors.

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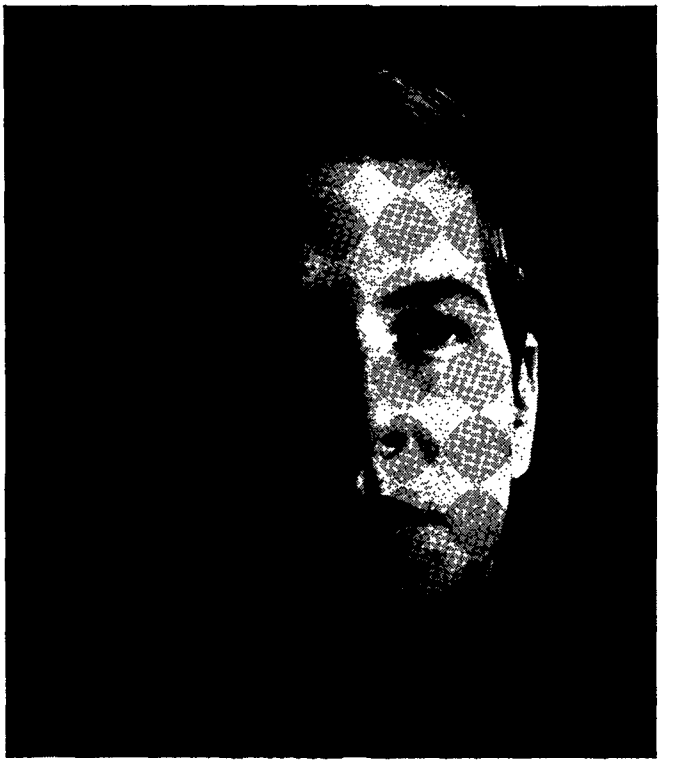

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Bearing Witness

PROTEST: PACIFISM AND POLITICS. By JAMES FINN. *Random House. 528 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by WALTER GOODMAN

THE PEACE MOVEMENT at present defies definition; it has a score of centers and no fixed boundaries. Nevertheless, as the most dynamic political expression of the time it calls for exploration, and that is the work that James Finn has undertaken with creditable results in *Protest: Pacifism and Politics.* A former editor of *Commonweal* and now editor of *worldview*, Finn is familiar with the literature of the movement and he knows its leading personalities, particularly the Catholic battalion. In this volume, he records some three dozen conversations with such celebrities of peace as the late A. J. Muste, John J. Bennett, David McReynolds, Staughton Lynd, Julian Bond, Bayard Rustin, Abraham Joshua Heschel, Dorothy Day, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and Joan Baez. The interviews are accompanied by useful introductions (though they are so uniformly kind that they become a bit wearying), and the book succeeds in conveying the movement's most powerful impulses, its theoretical underpinnings such as they are, and its inherent strains.

The peace movement derives much of its dynamism from young people who were inspired, then disheartened, by the civil-rights struggle, and much of its newsworthiness from Catholics awakened by Pope John. (In such a cause, one living priest in a march is worth three Presbyterian ministers, eight Unitarians, and a dozen rabbis.) It harbors veterans of the Old Left, but the Progressive-party mentalities can do little with free-wheeling militants who would bridle at a 1948-style discipline, or with liberals who have built up a resistance to the virus of fellow-traveldom. It contains pacifists of all description and some who beggar description; there are people drugged on non-violence and people intoxicated by violence. It is a movement both of intellectuals and of activists who require a kind of stimulation that the intellect does not ordinarily provide. It is, willy nilly, a highly political phenomenon, but its most dramatic episodes have been staged by youths who distrust and scorn the political process.

Finn is a conscientious guide to all the diverse elements of the movement, but his tour is especially enlightening when he comes to the ideologues of peace. Here are absolute pacifists confronted with the ever-awkward question of what they would have done against Hitler, and giving replies that are likely to satisfy mainly their fellow absolute pacifists. Here is Rabbi Steven S. Schwarzschild saying that as a "utopian revolutionary" it is his job to be relevant to God and his fellow man, not to the existing situation—a very nice distinction indeed. Here are nuclear pacifists bowed over the altar of unilateral disarmament. Here, too, are proponents of the "just war" theory, notably William V. O'Brien—one of two interviewees who seem to support the administration's Vietnam policies—with some chilling remarks on the pros and cons of torture.

THE ARGUMENTS put forward here about pacifism and the "just war" presuppose a religious or ideological commitment not widely shared today. The man who takes the purity of his own soul as the measure of all things can in good conscience be a pacifist—probably he can be nothing but a pacifist—but the condition of his soul is not open to fruitful discussion with outsiders. Similarly, ruminations on the authenticity and specifics of the "just war" theory may be indispensable for persons who need to reconcile their attitudes toward Vietnam with the tenets of their religion; but for those who do not accept these tenets, the issue comes down to whether we ought to be in Vietnam in the first place, and whether we ought to be doing the things that we are doing there. These questions can be discussed without exotic reference points; what is required is some knowledge of the history of our involvement in Vietnam, along with a garden-variety of simple humanity. One may grant that Father Philip Berrigan's anti-war stand is inseparable from his theology, but the reason that he is more persuasive than most of those in this volume who argue from a religious position is that he allows himself to deal intelligibly with the everyday world. By contrast, it is small comfort to learn that in the opinion of the Rev. Richard John Neuhaus, a nuclear war would not defeat God's purpose.

Beyond bearing witness to their ideals, then, the pacifists have little to say to those of us who, like John Bennett, "have difficulty with absolutes." As Paul Deats, himself an absolute pacifist, concedes, the members of his school have a weakness for "group soliloquy." Non-pacifists may be forgiven for feeling that they are attempting to find their way through a long, dark, and curving tunnel, at the far end of which stands the pacifist holding aloft his torch. The knowledge of his presence there is heartening, but his remote light, though it may envelop him in glory and even give off some warmth for the rest of mankind, does not really illuminate the century's tunnel; it does not help one to navigate its treacherous turns.

WALTER GOODMAN's *book,* The Committee—*a history of the House Committee on Un-American Activities—has just been published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux.*

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The pacifists are not representative of the peace movement. No single group is. Nevertheless, in the past few years the movement has come to be typified by the young demonstrators who have enlivened city streets and college campuses. They share no single ideology, but the opinions which many of them hold about America are troubling in their implications for the movement as a whole. It is no injustice to these "mystical-romantic-adventurous-sectarian-putschist types" to whom Staughton Lynd says he is drawn, to say that they tend to "explain" American society by two words: racism and imperialism. Unhappily for this nation, the words refer to real ailments, but in the form in which they are tossed about by the young militants they are hardly worth discussing. (Some of the new radicals attribute their insights into "monopoly capitalism" to C. Wright Mills; one can only wish that they may some day read Adolf Berle and John Kenneth Galbraith.) What does need to be discussed, however, are the actions that proceed from such a view of America.

If one believes that this country is fundamentally or exclusively racist and imperialist, then the present war becomes merely another incident, albeit a frightful one, in an endless list of crimes, beginning with the slaughter of the American Indian. Vietnam is only special if it is seen as the result of an ascending series of miscalculations, or the fruition of a foreign policy that can be changed, or even as a criminal act by a state that is not criminal in the sense that Hitler's Germany was. For those who despair of this society, however, the Vietnam dissent is important primarily as a means of "radicalizing" the dissenters for the revolution to come. Indeed, the wilder demonstrations are often justified on this ground rather than on the ground that they will help to end the war.

SEVERAL OF the interviews in this volume, as well as Finn's own observations, indicate that there is an abundance of good sense as well as good will within the peace movement. The problem is to harness that good sense and good will to stir a nation the largest segment of which is still, in Heschel's words, a "Society Unconcerned About Vietnam." No one quarrels with the desirability of winning over the large numbers of seemingly unconcerned people who in matters of war and diplomacy are inclined to trust the administration—any administration. The difficulty is that even though their trust may now be wavering, they shy away from demonstrations of dissent, and most emphatically from mystical-romantic-adventurous-sectarian-putschist type demonstrations. (Even Joan Baez, the chief adornment of anti-war rallies, has been put off by protestors who want to weight their picket signs with lead.) Bayard Rustin's comment that there is no way in which violence can help in our present situation ought to be turned into a slogan and carried on (unweighted) placards. But many of the New Leftists are temperamentally incapable of the public good manners required to persuade the uncommitted; they prefer to stoke the fires for the great showdown. If by some exceedingly peculiar chance they should ever realize their dreams of "confrontation," it will be a suicidal accomplishment.

Meanwhile, the war continues; the administration, self-righteous and dishonest, seems set on military victory; the Republicans offer no alternative; and there is desperation in the peace movement. The frustration of shouting and shouting without being heard, along with certain private needs, continues to drive numbers of protestors off the deep end: any inanity at home is justified by the atrocities abroad. Even as bright a War Resister as David McReynolds succumbs to fantasies of an "Impeach Johnson" campaign.

Youth movements age fast, and whether the New Left portion of the peace forces will remain active after the war depends, I think, on the extent to which it will have found effective means to work for its goals. That is to say, it depends both on American society and on the militants themselves. Some of the people in the vanguard of protest have a great deal to offer this country in personal courage, in compassion, and in a vision of a less restrictive social order. But

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they have yet to take to heart James Finn's warning that "a moral solution to a political problem that is not also a political solution is no solution." Unless they are able to come to grips with the system—which is much harder than "confronting" it symbolically—they can only dissipate their remarkable energies and potentialities. That would be a serious loss both to themselves and to the rest of us.

Double Jeopardy

AMERICANS IN ISRAEL. By HAROLD R. ISAACS. *John Day. 256 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by AMOS ELON

IS ISRAEL TO BE merely a haven for the persecuted and the stateless, settled by those who have no other choice and financed by those who do? Like so much else in Israel, this question has generated conflicting emotions, controversy, bitter self-admonishment, and, as Harold Isaacs says in this richly documented, detached, and unusually well-written book, "a kind of suspended confusion that comes out of a common unwillingness to force such issues, to allow them rather to work out in time."

For most Israelis, the question of immigration from the free countries of the West—in particular from the United States—has always been a sore point, a cause of endless grumbling, of admonishment and recrimination. Why, they ask, are there so few American settlers in Israel? (Less than two-tenths of 1 per cent of America's 5,500,000 Jews now live in Israel, where they constitute a mere half of one per cent of Israel's two million Jews.) For every American Jew who has come to Israel and stayed, five or more have eventually left. Some catastrophe-oriented Israelis have accused American Jews of living in a fools' paradise of false security; others, while halfheartedly admitting that America is not the same as Europe, have appealed to American Jews on the basis of a common sense of national identity, and a common desire for a Jewish renaissance.

This entire issue was recently reopened as a result of the Six-Day War, when an unprecedented wave of sympathy for Israel swept Jews everywhere, and somewhere between twenty- and twenty-five thousand volunteers registered at Israeli consulates throughout the West. Of this number, some six thousand actually came to Israel. The influx, though partly subsidized by public funds, caught local authorities unprepared, and their improvised methods of employing the volunteers gave rise to much criticism. Almost the only sector capable of absorbing the newcomers proved to be the kibbutzim, with the result that many who had rushed to Israel to save it from extinction found themselves instead picking apples. Absorption of the volunteers was complicated in part by dislocations caused by the war, and in part by the fact that in July and August there was still considerable unemployment in Israel. Authorities, understandably, were reluctant to employ foreign volunteers at the expense of Israeli workers, many of whom had just returned from war service as army reservists. (About twenty-five hundred volunteers are reported to be still in Israel.)

Early in July, a joint session of the Israeli cabinet and the Executive Council of the Jewish Agency issued an impassioned appeal to the Jews of the West, couched in characteristically biblical terms: "Rise ye all, come up and build the country. . . . Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up and come!" The appeal was answered first by an editorial in the local daily *Haaretz*, which reproached the government for clouding the issue and evading real problems with empty phraseology. The reasons behind American Jewish reluctance to emigrate to Israel, the paper suggested, were deeper than those allowed for in traditional Zionist rhetoric. "We should address appeals above all to ourselves. What is needed now is change within Israel more than appeals directed abroad. The most successful rhetoric cannot hide the

AMOS ELON, *a prominent Israeli journalist and author of* Journey through a Haunted Land, *contributed "The Israeli Occupation" to our March issue.*

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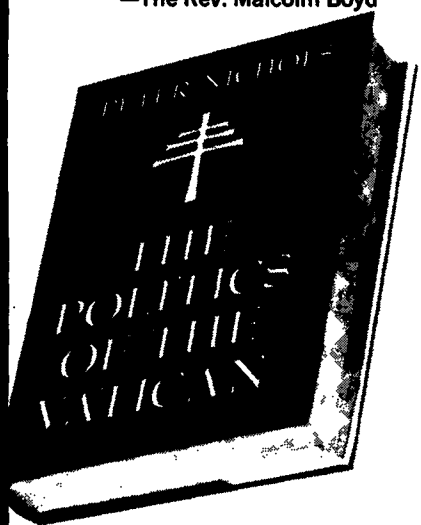

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fact that the Jews of the West have not in the past and are not now emigrating to Israel. Those who have come have almost all returned because the makeup of Israeli society and the quality of life here do not fit the taste of young Jews from the West, and at times are even contrary to the image drawn by our own propagandists abroad."

Reflecting a debate that has dominated Israeli politics in the past few years, the paper continued: "We are a paradox of deep conservatism under a cover of superficial dynamism, and of deadening ideological immobility against the background of frantic muscular activity. As Jews we form a closed island of Eastern European doctrinaire collectivism set in the modern open world of technology in which our brethren in the West live."

THE DEBATE continues, and Harold Isaacs's *Americans in Israel* is likely to add more fuel to the fire. This highly readable study is based on a thorough knowledge of conditions in Israel, on much reading, and on a series of intensive interviews with some fifty American settlers. Isaacs describes vividly and authoritatively the material difficulties and other hardships encountered by Americans in Israel: lower wages, inadequate housing or schools, high taxes, the insensitivity, even rudeness of Israeli bureaucrats ("they are like all other bureaucrats, only more so"), and, if the particular American happens to be a religious Jew but non-Orthodox, the unsatisfactory quality of religious life in Israel. "Here you are either Orthodox or nothing," one interviewee told Isaacs. The rabbi of a Conservative congregation in a small American city who had tried to settle in Israel stated that the only way he could stay was to go into business, and this he could not do. "He shook his head with a rueful kind of sadness. 'The truth is that I have found that America is more conducive to living religiously than Israel is.' "

Factors such as these are important, and they surely account in part for the steady attrition in the ranks of American Jews who have come to settle in Israel. But the main difficulty of the American in Israel, according to Isaacs, is to be located less in any hardship he may suffer, material or otherwise, than in the unique crisis of national identity which the experience of immigration forces him to undergo. This crisis is what sets Americans in Israel apart from settlers of European or Afro-Asian origin, whose commitment to their new society, Isaacs feels, is stronger and more absolute. Americans who feel alienated from American society come to Israel to be Jews and insiders, and they end up in Israel being identified, and identifying themselves, as Americans and hence again as outsiders. This paradox, says Isaacs, is unique to American immigrants; it explains their relative isolation in Israeli society (Isaacs finds them "orphaned"), and perhaps their small number too. They have simply "opted out," voluntarily. The reasons, as Isaacs sees them, are rooted in the uniqueness of the historical experience of America as an "open society," if not yet in deed, at least in theory, a theory now "painfully becoming fact." This openness, both as goal and as partial reality, he says, has created, more than any other fact, the specialness of the American identity. It marks the difference between American Jews and those of other countries, "and remains stamped hard even on this small number of American Jews who had been driven by some lack in their lives as Americans to emigrate to Israel to try to give priority to living as Jews."

In Israel, many of these American Jews were found by Isaacs to have held on to their American passports even after one, two, and three decades of living in Israel on extended tourist visas or as "temporary residents"; thus they remain ineligible for military service or voting privileges and are immune from many local taxes, living as strangers in a paradise of their own choosing; possessing a "cake-eating, cake-having status." Wavering between loyalties, they never really choose one over the other. They waver for a number of complicated reasons, some practical, some not, but as Isaacs points out, the ambivalence is anchored in a primary fidelity to their identity as Americans that transcends or at

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least runs parallel to their identity as Jews. Another reason, until recently, has been legal: unlike that of Britain or most European countries, the law of the United States has prohibited dual citizenship for Americans, as well as service in foreign armies or participation in foreign elections. This has forced Americans in Israel to a choice not required of their British, or other Western, compatriots.

WHATEVER THE reasons, Isaacs has found the Americans of Israel to be a group apart, commonly referred to by other Israelis, with a mixture of irony, malice, envy, and a certain amount of grudging admiration, as "the Anglo-Saxons." Even their status as an immigrant group is ambiguous. There are in Israel, as in other countries containing a large immigrant population, a plethora of national associations like "The Association of Immigrants from Poland," or the "Association of Immigrants from Central Europe." American immigrants have thus far shied away from such appellations; they call themselves simply "Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel." Significantly, a motion to change the name to "Association of American and Canadian *Settlers* in Israel" was rejected by the membership in 1962. Isaacs makes the point that the simple matter of a name is probably the most elementary of all identity symbols. It carries a great freight of meaning, and while it is seldom itself the heart of the matter, "it often points directly to where the heart can be found."

As the author of a related inquiry into group identity patterns of American Negroes who have gone to live in West Africa, Isaacs finds certain similarities between the two groups. He writes: "I found that despite obvious differences of kind, scope, scale, and circumstance, many of these American Jews in Israel did indeed have something in common with the American Negroes I had met earlier in West Africa. In both cases they were people who felt themselves to be outsiders in the American society and out of this common feeling had gone off to Africa or Israel to find ways of belonging among their own kind, to become 'insiders' as Negroes or as Jews. What they most commonly found instead, in both cases, was that they remained outsiders, as Americans."

This phenomenon of dual alienation is characteristic, admittedly, of only the first generation of immigrants; it largely disappears among the second generation of native-born, who, in Israel as elsewhere, are susceptible more to the pull of the society in which they have grown up than to the influence of the parental home. The children of Americans in Israel usually opt for Israeli citizenship, serve in the Army, and vote in elections. But the dilemma of the first generation of American immigrants remains.

Isaacs points out in his introduction—written as the book was about to go to press—that the U.S. Supreme Court may have outdated some of the more formal, or legal aspects of this dilemma. In a case involving an American citizen who had voted in an Israeli election and lost his citizenship as a result, the Supreme Court, in May 1967, stated that Congress had no power to deprive Americans of their nationality without consent. Whether or not this decision means that Americans may now take out Israeli citizenship papers with no threat to their American nationality, is not yet clear; nor is it clear whether or not they may serve in the army, or vote, or be elected to office in Israel. While there is little doubt that the May 1967 ruling, which reverses a number of previous decisions, has been received with relief by many Americans living in Israel, it still remains to be seen whether this is the answer to their particular problem.

IN THIS BOOK Isaacs is, by his own account, attempting to pinpoint a situation that is in the process of change, "trying to catch and hold it for a moment of scrutiny like a frame of a motion picture stopped for a longer look." Isaacs seems to hold out some hope that the dilemma of identity can disappear, but he is far from committing himself. What he says, in effect, is that it is hard, if not impossible, under the present circumstances, to be both a good Israeli and a good American at the same time. Many Israelis

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and many Americans will agree—some gladly, others reluctantly or sadly. Still others may hold out the hope for new, perhaps more civilized forms of nationality growing out of a new sense of Jewish solidarity, forms of allegiance less mutually exclusive, and less absolute. But before this can happen much will have to change in Israel, as well as in America.

Personal Politics

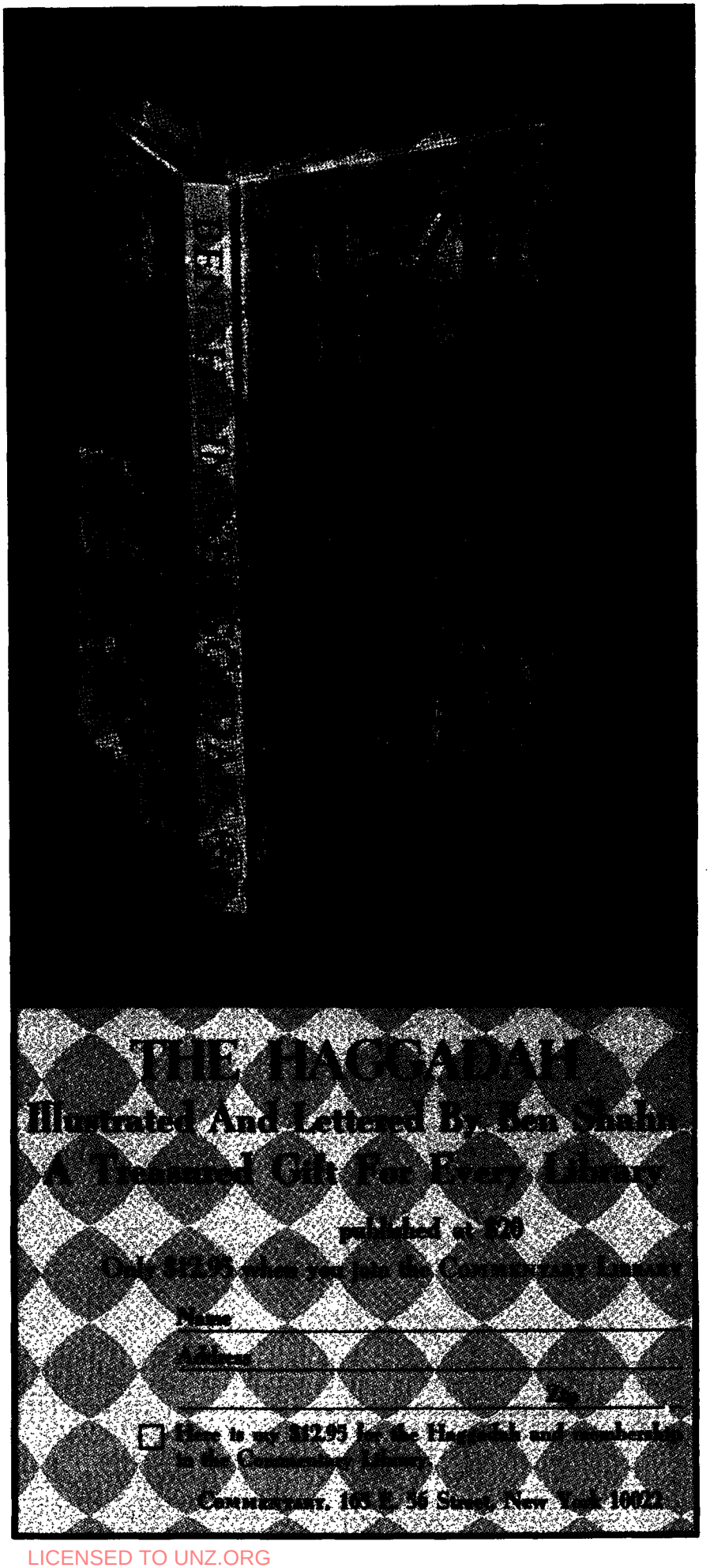
TWENTY LETTERS TO A FRIEND. By SVETLANA ALLILUYEVA. Translated by PRISCILLA JOHNSON MCMILLAN. *Harper & Row. 246 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by RICHARD POIRIER

SVETLANA ALLILUYEVA is the last, and least talented, of the Brontë sisters, and the only way to read *Twenty Letters to a Friend* is not as history but as a romantic novel. The clue is in the opening phrase, "It is quiet here." (*Wuthering Heights*?) The time is the summer of 1963, the place is Zukovska, and at thirty-seven "this is where I belong—not in the city or the Kremlin." She belongs, that is to say, outside the modern system which her father imposed on Russia after her mother's death, destroying in the process what she later refers to as the "early knights of the Revolution." Even as she writes, Svetlana thinks fondly of the home less than a mile away from Zukovska in the town of Usolvo where her mother presided before her suicide in 1931. Romantic landscape, a dead mother, the "old party people," especially of the Alliluyeva family—these are with us from the beginning, along, of course, with God, as alternatives to the world from which she has chosen to absent herself: "Moscow, breathing fire like a human volcano with its smoldering lava of passion, ambition, and politics, its hurly burly of meetings and entertainment, Moscow is less than twenty miles away."

Sensing vaguely that this romantic mist has a strangely political

RICHARD POIRIER *is an editor of* Partisan Review *and chairman of the English department at Rutgers.*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odor, we move to the first letter. It concerns the death of Stalin, and it's a bit surprising to encounter so early on, from a writer of such avowed simplicity, one of the artful disruptions of chronology which necessitates the many tiresome recapitulations whenever she does decide to work for a bit along the chronological track. Letter One finds her being hastened from French class at the Academy (*Villette*?) to a horridly prolonged, medically barbaric death scene. "It's a strange thing," she tells us, "but during those days of illness when he was nothing but body out of which the soul had flown and later, during the days of leave-taking in the Hall of Columns, I loved my father more tenderly than I ever had before." (Jane Eyre reunited finally with a shattered and at last inferior Rochester?) With her are leading members of the Soviet government, but, along with nearly everyone else in this book, they are treated like so many uninteresting neighbors. Her failure to imagine very much about any of them, and her insistence that we shouldn't look on her life "as anything special," does, however, confirm something I've always suspected: that the Soviet government, like any totalitarian group, precisely to the degree that it doesn't appeal to any constituency outside itself, degenerates into a kind of neighborhood of relatives and friends, all working for the same company, all living in and around the company town. About like a less automated Wilmington, Delaware, or Grosse Pointe. That's the social price for being at the top in a dictatorship, along with having to synchronize your sleeping and eating schedules with the erratic behavior of the town squire *cum* bossman. (Stalin, for example, liked to sleep until about two in the afternoon, and you can imagine what that did to everybody's schedule.)

Anyway, there they were at the sofa on which he slept, located in a bedroom that was also the dining- and meeting room, Stalin's domestic appointments being less those of a *petit bourgeois* like Hitler than of a sloppy and eccentric retainer holed up in some corner of the estate. Gathered round were his old associates, ambition far to the rear of their tear-filled eyes, portly folk like Khrushchev and Bulganin, all anxious to commiserate with the sole surviving member of the family. All except one, of course, the Villain. Lavrenty Beria by name, he's ready, even before "the spirit wrenched itself free of the flesh," to be cruel to his benefactor's child. Watching from behind his glistening *pince nez* for the last breath and the main chance, and knowing that the moment isn't far off, Beria "caught sight of me and ordered: 'Take Svetlana away!' Those who were standing nearby stared but nobody moved. Afterward he darted into the hallway ahead of anybody else. The silence of the room where everyone was gathered around the death bed was shattered by the sound of his loud voice, the ring of triumph unconcealed, as he shouted, 'Khrustalyov! My car!' " Off he speeds, "the embodiment of Oriental perfidy, flattery, and hypocrisy," a "monster" whose vileness, we are told in the first few pages, "is a blot on my father's name."

ONE THING IS sure, nobody liked Beria. Svetlana's mother as early as 1929, when he'd come up from Georgia for a visit, told Stalin that "that man must not be allowed to set foot in our house." (Stalin asked for facts, and when she produced none told her to go to hell.) And physically he was, well—"plump, greenish, pale," according to Djilas in his *Conversations with Stalin*. Djilas, by the way, on the basis of a few dinners, has more telling impressions to share with us about these people than does Mrs. Alliluyeva after forty years of it. Of course there were plenty of reasons to detest Beria, especially if you thought he'd managed to dispose of over half of your and your father's relatives even without your father's encouragement. But in projecting her understandable detestations, these opening scenes are suspect not merely because they're rather too literary and, given the cast, comically theatrical. They also manage to be political, in a shrewd, coy way. The politics is carried subliminally, as it were, under the gossip, under the guise of simplicity, under the melodrama of deaths and

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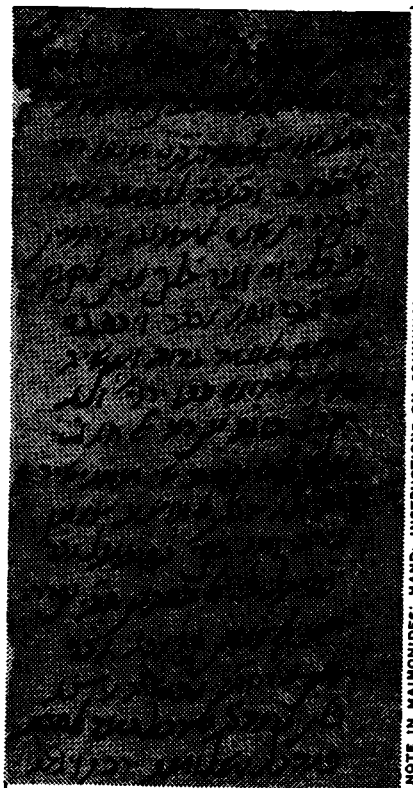
entrances. For good reason, then, the death scene had to come at the beginning: not merely to catch the reader's interest but even more to catch him politically off guard. Who'd suspect any such maneuvering in a book by Little Me out here where it's quiet, a book not even intended for publication when it was written? To believe that Beria's conduct at this moment and his appearance ("his face, repulsive enough at the best of times, now was twisted by his passions—by ambition, cruelty, cunning, and a lust for power and more power still"), to propose this as the expression of "triumph," is a way covertly of asking us to believe that Stalin was somehow in Beria's way, that Stalin opposed rather than abetted and initiated Beria's activities. More than likely Beria was simply scared out of his wits as he watched his sole promoter and protector slowly strangle to death. No wonder he got out of there before anyone else —back to headquarters, where he could be as green as he wanted to be with his trusties guarding the door. Stalin died in March, by June Beria was in prison, by December he was shot. So much for his "triumph" at the moment of Stalin's death, so much for his sources of power independent of Stalin, and for the effectiveness of his political plotting when it wasn't in the service of Stalin.

THIS IS a strangely difficult book to read not simply because the style is at once lurid and vague, but more because it's impossible to tell whether or not Svetlana Alliluyeva is politically illiterate out of emotional commitments or disingenuous out of political shrewdness. She probably doesn't know herself, and it seems obvious from what we can learn about Stalin in this book and in Isaac Deutscher's *Stalin*, that Stalin was of a similarly curious mix. Like father, like daughter—with one important difference: political genius is precisely such confusion released from conscience, which is not to say that that's the only reason why Svetlana is not a political or any other kind of genius.

The Beria of this book, then, is assuredly not the Beria of history, who in fact didn't even get to Mos-



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cow from Georgia, where he may well have bumped off a few people at his master's behest, until after the bloodiest years of Stalin's reign, from 1934 to 1938. When he did replace Yezhof at NKVD his job was not to accelerate the purges but to put the brakes on them. Having acknowledged at several points that Stalin did not like Jews, Svetlana has of course some trouble assigning to Beria what were to be the beginnings of another purge, this time with the characteristics of a pogrom—the case of the Kremlin doctors in 1952. Nonetheless she assures us that Stalin "was extremely distressed at the turn events took," and that he didn't believe the doctors were "dishonest."

It's been argued that one virtue of this book is that it really is *not* very useful as history. Because it wasn't written from hindsight, after Svetlana learned what was going on, we do get an accurate picture, so this argument goes, of what it was like to live around Stalin in childish innocence and affection. But the childlike role adopted by Mrs. Alliluyeva in these letters has enough of the effect of political stratagem to make the passages I've been discussing seem, in placement and phrasing, nothing less than a product of calculated hindsight and whitewashing. Just how does Mrs. Alliluyeva expect us to respond to her introductory hope that "maybe when I've written it all down, an unbearable burden of some kind will fall from my shoulders at last and then my real life will begin"? Why "of some kind," unless the burden is up for grabs? Leaving aside the romantic fantasy that "real life" is a process of disencumbering oneself, it's impossible to find in this book the shape or weight of any particular "burden" much less any evidence that it has proved "unbearable." Any reader can of course imagine a "burden" for the daughter of Stalin, but at issue is what *she* imagines it to be. When Beria isn't the pack horse for Stalin, and therefore to a great extent for herself, it turns out to be "the system of which [Stalin] himself was a prisoner." Loyal daughter and defector, she has found a way to do something which, so far as I know, is wholly original, an invention which it is to be hoped will remain uniquely her own—she has managed to use anti-Communism to exonerate Josef Stalin, even while suggesting, in her quite unconvincing evocations of Mother, that Stalin betrayed the revolution.

IF THE VIRTUES of this book can scarcely be called historical, and if its perspectives are too muddled ever to be considered innocent, can one at least, following the lead of several of the more enamored reviewers, call it courageous? It has been compared, for example, to a book that really is courageous, Evgenia Ginsburg's *Into the Whirlwind*, an account of the author's eighteen years of labor-camp imprisonment and suffering from which she returned still able to clarify her loyalty to Communism and the USSR. One meaning of courage surely is that you let yourself understand what has happened to you, and that kind of courage isn't here at all. Courage can also mean that if some things haven't happened to you, even though you were continually in the way of them, then you face the possibility that you are someone to whom certain kinds of experience are impossible, to whom a range of impressions simply isn't available. Perhaps you are a person of no particular time or place, with vague and dislocated feelings derived less from the things you've encountered than from the things you haven't found. To admit that you are such a person takes an enormous amount of courage, I would suppose. And it's this kind of courage that Svetlana Alliluyeva and this book desperately ask for.

In important ways she was not a witness to the history of which she claims to have been a part. By which I don't mean that we expect any dark secrets about governments and personalities. Instead, I simply mean that she ought to give some indication that she was alive to the times and places in which she lived or, if she wasn't, that she face that fact. Aside from some family gossip and some domestic notes, she brings nothing out to us, and even her account of her mother's suicide, when she discovered that it was one some ten years after the event and had opportunity to question relatives and friends, is much less informative, much less passionately interested than the account in Deutscher's book. With no embarrassment, and confident of our uncritical sympathy, she reports at thirty-seven that when she visited her father during the early and disaster-ridden months of the war he was "irritable and busy . . . I was terribly alone that winter. Maybe it was my age—sixteen, a time of dreams and doubts and seeking, unlike anything I've ever known before." It was at sixteen, too, we may remember, that her mother married Stalin, who was then thirty-eight, and obviously it wasn't easy for the daughter to be left with an aging, almost wholly preoccupied father and with no mother at all. But is that *all* that was happening to her? Given what was going on, her self-absorption, even for a quite special girl her age, was extraordinary, and the uncritical reporting of this self-absorption by a woman of thirty-seven is even more so. It indicates a personality that has remained nearly incapable of seeing anything beyond a radically foreshortened area of emotional need. If an historical cataclysm like the war didn't get to her, neither, I'm afraid, did the vast undertakings, the epic developments of her own country, nor did the various personages with whom she claims to have spent interminable and boring dinners, like Kaganovich, Malenkov, Molotov, Mikoyan, and Khrushchev. She offers scarcely a phrase of characterization even though she saw some of them up to the time of her defection. Freed of the "burdens" of political inquisitiveness, must the book also be freed even of the historical anecdotes which should be the consequence of taking on the most casual burdens of other peoples' company and their manners?

The only times when adult experience has much interest for the author is when she is in the one role she can imagine for herself—the role of a child. Maybe what she means by the vague phrase "a burden of some kind," is simply the burden of age, of the sheer passage of time. She means, that is, something largely non-historical, as one might expect in so curiously roman-

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tic a novel as this one. Nature and God are predictable successors to Mother and Stalin, and to the failed attempts at personal relationships after her sixteenth year. She herself doesn't suggest that her marriages amounted to anything: the first in 1944 to Grigory Morozoff, a young man who displeased Stalin by being Jewish and by managing somehow to stay out of the war; and the second, after she divorced Morozoff ("for reasons of a personal nature," we are advised, as if this distinguished it from other divorces) to the son of Andrei Zhdanov. About the elder Zhdanov, presumably Stalin's heir apparent and probably no better than Beria, she offers not a word. And of the son, she says merely that her marriage to him was "a matter of hard common sense but without any special love or affection." Her most intense non-familial relationship, at least in the book, is with Alexei Kapler during the winter of 1942-43. She was a schoolgirl of seventeen, he a successful filmmaker of forty. Stalin broke up the affair by shipping Kapler to the Arctic Circle for five years charging that he was a British spy, and he berated his daughter in tones that became unfortunately typical of their domestic scenes at the Kremlin: " 'Love!' screamed my father, with a hatred of the very word I can scarcely convey. And for the first time in his life he slapped me across the face, twice. 'Just look, nurse, how low she's sunk!' He could no longer restrain himself. 'Such a war going on, and she's busy the whole time -----!' Unable to find any other expression, he used the coarse peasant word." Pretty rough, but then it's hard to imagine any parent approving of such a relationship. While what appear to be vacuities later on are at this point maybe a function of youth, there is even here, especially, at a retrospective glance, a disturbing absence of any developed relationship between Svetlana and people her own age, anyone who is not a parental reflection, a parental substitute, or a parental defiance, no one at school, no friends from the other leading families.

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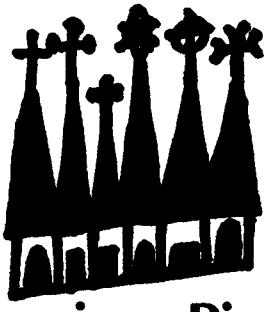

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sponsiveness, the burden of historical feeling or participation, none of these is had for the asking and none is proved by rhetoric. Above all, there is no literary evidence that such burdens have ever been accepted. Literary evidence would be mostly, I think, in the effort to make one attitude, one position, coherent or consistent with another, in indications on one page that she has accepted the price of having said something on another page to which, despite any inconvenience, she acknowledges at least some responsibility. Instead, one of the marked peculiarities of this book is in the variety of its inconsistencies, ranging all the way from small matters to the centrally important one of her parental preferences. Of her father's *dacha* at Kutsevo, she says "I never liked it," and two pages later launches into a description of "what I liked about the house"; in one account, Stalin's working dinners "generally started between six and seven in the evening and went on until eleven or twelve," until we're told a dozen pages later that they were "usually at table for two hours"; romantically lamenting at the beginning of Letter 16 that she and Kapler "saw each other only a few hours," she proceeds to tell us about meetings that stretched, without interruption, over five months, some of them in an "empty apartment" which she also tells us was used by air force friends of her brother Vasily. Stalin, who in the middle of the war took time out personally to end the affair with Kapler, is called a "neglectful" parent while being berated for interference that extends even to complaints about his daughter's clothing; by contrast, the mother is "a good family woman" late in the book where earlier she is said to be "practically never at home" and to have spent "little time with us." Of the same mother, she can't at one moment "recall her kissing or caressing me ever," while later she recalls that "she seldom kissed me or stroked my hair."

Depending on her portrait of her mother and her preferences for her as a parent, is Svetlana's romantic idealization of the "old party" as represented by the Alliluyeva family and their friends. It's therefore crucial that throughout, while claiming that her mother was the better parent, all of her evidence points the other way, notably her quotations of the one letter, cold and admonishing, that her mother sent her and quotations from the many letters, full of affectionate games and phrases—"my little Housekeeper," "my little sparrow"—addressed by Stalin even as late as 1950. While the mother was alive, she assures us, Stalin was "neither a god nor a cult, but just a father of a family"—and we know we're reading a domestic allegorization of the politics of the personality cult. In terms of that allegory, the suicide of the mother becomes a portent of political disasters for the family, the revolution, and the Soviet Union: "The steady annihilation of everything my mother had created, [the] systematic elimination of her very spirit so that nothing was left of it, so that everything would be exactly the opposite of what she had stood for." She asks whether her mother's death simply left Stalin free to do what he wanted to do anyway, or whether "her suicide broke his spirit and made him lose his faith in all his old friends." Such questions, by suggesting that politics is exclusively a matter of personality, are quite useless in that they exclude the areas of national and even international politics which any answer is expected to cover. Anyway, we've already been told three pages earlier that "My father's spirit was in a sense broken." And guess who noticed it first—Beria, of course, "more treacherous, more practiced in perfidy and cunning, more insolent and single-minded than my father. In a word he was a stronger character."

Mrs. Alliluyeva's political motives are probably as unconscious—and therefore as compulsive—as are the social ambitions and sexual sadisms that propel the rhetorics of God and Nature in those 19th-century novels of the Brontës. For 1968, the similarity, however interesting, is also quite obnoxious, especially since Mrs. Alliluyeva's way with people and politics isn't nowadays nearly as unique, in its literariness, as might be hoped. Indeed, these "letters to a friend" are important as an example of how politics can't really be intelligently discussed as a derivative of personalities, and that to confound the two is to escape the burden of either.

A Literary Gathering

THE EXPERIENCE OF LITERATURE: A READER WITH COMMENTARIES. By LIONEL TRILLING. *Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1320 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by DENIS DONOGHUE

IN LIONEL TRILLING'S short story, "Of This Time, Of That Place," a college instructor, Dr. Howe, is teaching a composition class, English IA, at Dwight College. The text for the course is Jarman's *Modern Plays*, revised edition. Two members of the class are particularly engaging; Theodore Blackburn, because his stupidity is invincible and sinister; Ferdinand R. Tertan, because he is mad. Their colleagues are predictable; DeWitt is a straight A, no problem; Johnson a B; Arthur J. Casebeer is a B-minus or a C-plus; Stettenhover was born to get a C-minus. I forget what grade Hibbard got; he sounds C to me. But the chief interest of the story is in Tertan. Mad, yes, but it cannot be said of him, as Polonius said of Hamlet, that he is "nothing else but mad." The story implies that he is the most significant member of the class, and it urges us to question the scheme of things by which he is deemed mad and Blackburn sane. Mr. Trilling has remarked:

> If the story has any power at all, it surely lies in its ability to generate resistance to the certitude that Tertan is deranged. The impulse to resist the undeniable fact comes, I suppose, from the common apprehension, conscious or unconscious, that the fabric of our reason is very delicate and always in danger. This impulse is reinforced by our modern anxiety at confronting a painful fate which cannot be accounted for in

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DENIS DONOGHUE *reviewed John Harrison's "The Reactionaries: A Study of the Anti-Democratic Intelligentsia" in our August 1967 issue. Mr. Donoghue is professor of Modern English and American Literature at University College (Dublin).*

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moral terms and which cannot be said to result from some fault of society.

The same argument is explored in the story itself when the class-discussion takes up Ibsen's *Ghosts*.

It is my impression that *The Experience of Literature* was compiled for the general purposes of English IA, but particularly with Dr. Howe's class in mind. "This is an anthology," Mr. Trilling writes, "designed to be used in college courses that undertake the study of literature in general, often with a view to 'introducing' the student to an art that he perhaps thinks of as remote from his interest." This is accurate as well as urbane, but Mr. Trilling's book, no ordinary anthology, is more ambitious than the statement implies. It is, in fact, an extremely important book; useful, of course, and excellent for its official purpose, but it is also a significant document in contemporary American culture. I believe that Mr. Trilling has tried to assemble a great book, a Sacred Book of the Arts; DeWitt will enjoy every word of it, Johnson may be inspired to get an A-minus, Casebeer, Hibbard, and Stettenhover will find enough to keep them enrolled, Blackburn will flunk the course. Tertan will pick out a few items which are chosen with great care and affection for him alone.

THE BIG BOOK is divided into four parts. The first part is all drama; complete texts of *Oedipus Rex, King Lear, The Wild Duck, The Three Sisters, The Doctor's Dilemma, Six Characters in Search of an Author, Purgatory,* and *Galileo.* I would have voted for *Heartbreak House* rather than *The Doctor's Dilemma,* but otherwise the list is excellent. The second part is all fiction; short stories, rather, by Hawthorne, Melville, Tolstoy, Maupassant, Chekhov, James, Conrad, Joyce, Kafka, Forster, Lawrence, Mann, Babel, Isak Dinesen, Hemingway, Faulkner, O'Hara, Trilling, Camus, and Malamud. There is also "The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov.* The stories are splendidly chosen except for the inclusion of Maugham's "The Treasure": Mr. Trilling makes a case here, but I would use the space

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for something better. The third part is Poetry, crucial poems from a 15th-century ballad to Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead." In these three parts every item is followed by a commentary, a short essay by Mr. Trilling somewhat on the lines of the essays in *A Gathering of Fugitives*. But we have still nearly four hundred pages for a fourth part, "Poetry for Further Reading," a more ample selection from the poetry of the same period, the early ballads, then Skelton, Wyatt, Spenser, and so forth until we reach Berryman, Lowell, Dickey, and two of my favorite lines from Ginsberg:

the war in Spain has ended long ago
Aunt Rose

These poems are given without comment.

It is an extraordinarily rich book, reminding us that if literary education is defective the fault is not in our literature but in ourselves, that we are indolent. Think of the books that Mr. Trilling has praised: in no particular sequence, *Rameau's Nephew, Notes from Underground, Heart of Darkness, The Golden Bough, The Birth of Tragedy, The Death of Ivan Ilyich, Little Dorrit, Our Mutual Friend, Emma, Howards End, Culture and Anarchy, The Bostonians, The Princess Casamassima, Rural Rides, Mansfield Park, Homage to Catalonia, Character and Opinion in the United States, Pot-Bouille*; to keep to prose. There is room for little of this great work in the anthology, but we feel its presence even when shorter works by the same authors have been chosen. Instead of *Heart of Darkness* we have "The Secret Sharer"; instead of *Howards End*, "The Road from Colonus." There is space for "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and Babel's "Di Grasso," both already praised in *Beyond Culture*. At every turn, there is the same impression of care, the sense of public and private relevance informing the choice. If "Bartleby" is included, we know that Mr. Trilling is proposing the story not merely because, in its kind, it is a masterpiece, but because that kind is especially relevant, in the best sense instructive. So it is not an exaggeration to say that the anthology is an important part of a critical process which has already produced *The Liberal Imagination*, as well as studies of Matthew Arnold and E. M. Forster, *The Opposing Self*, *A Gathering of Fugitives*, and *Beyond Culture*.

The care is evident in the commentaries as in the selection of items. Mr. Trilling's particular gift has always been an astonishingly graceful sense of the relation between literature and society. Or, to put it more accurately, a sense of the pressure of a particular book, say a novel, upon the society which receives it. When we admire his relevance, this is the grace we have in mind; that he can read an author whose books, to the conventional eye, seem irrelevant beyond redemption, and he sees at once where one force meets another. The essay on Howells is an outstanding example in *The Opposing Self*, or the essay on Keats's letters in the same volume. In the anthology the essays must be short, in the nature of the case, but they are unfailingly vivid; and tactful, never too much, never too little, just enough to stimulate the reader's mind, his values, his conscience. Perhaps the commentary on *The Three Sisters* is a little odd; Mr. Trilling writes of Chekhov in terms which make him sound like Tolstoy or Lawrence—celebration of life, reverence for life. I find it hard to see the play in that way; Mr. Trilling is so persuasive that I promise to try. The commentaries on Kafka, Babel, and Hawthorne are particularly good, but it is unnecessary to choose; the quality is very high throughout.

OF COURSE an anthology may be used in many different ways. It is clear that Mr. Trilling favors one way, in particular; where the story, the play, or the poem sets off a lively discussion of the morality it proposes. The discussion of *Ghosts* in "Of This Time, Of That Place" is not remarkable, but it is the kind of engagement which Mr. Trilling approves. "The question was, At whose door must the tragedy be laid?" Casebeer blames heredity, Johnson blames Pastor Manders, DeWitt blames Society. I am not sure that I would always want the discussion to move along those lines: at some point the teacher should remind the class that there is a difference between *Ghosts* and, say, any other topic that invites moral discussion; Vietnam, the ethics of war, the Great Society; the difference being that *Ghosts* is drama, art, literature, and the other topics are not. On the chosen ground, however, Mr. Trilling's discussions are bound to be lively, perhaps because of his own ambiguities. He is a moral critic in the sense that he never willingly loses sight of the relation between books and life. When he refers to the order of the book, we know that he is not thinking of a self-enclosed order, closed on all sides. Indeed, a crucial question in his later criticism is the question of chaos. How much disorder should a feasible order embrace? How much irrationality should a rational society be capable of receiving?

Mr. Trilling is devoted to order, and he is alive to chaos; so his mind is constantly engaged with the double problem proposed by these terms. In other words, Mr. Trilling's inescapable terms, as a critic, are morality and politics. But he knows

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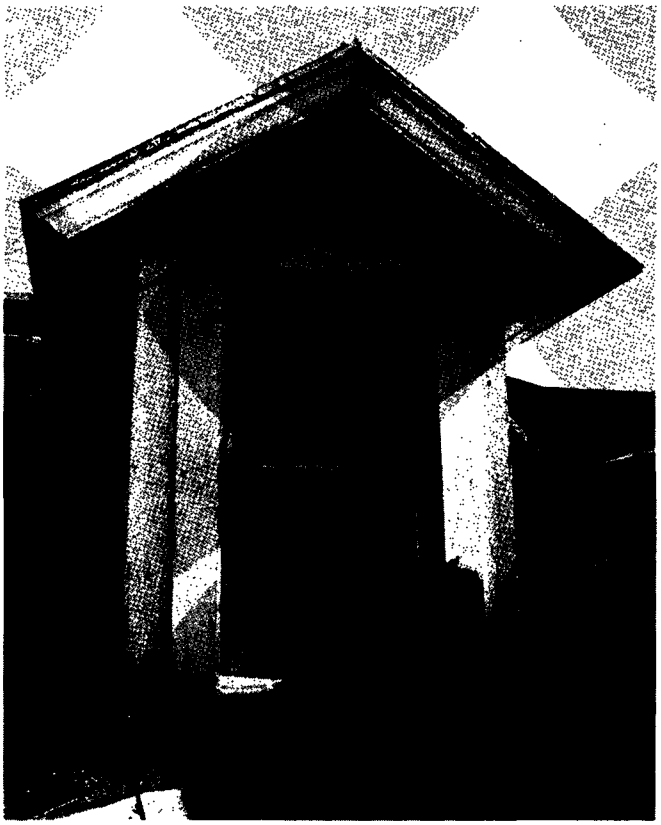

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Nicolas H. Charney, Ph.D., Editor/Publisher *PSYCHOLOGY TODAY* MAGAZINE

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that one of the most fundamental tests of morality and politics is the test enforced by great literature. This is, for him, the perennial interest of literature. When it comes to the question of imagination, there are as many possibilities as those represented by Dr. Howe's class. Surely Tertan would speak, if he were to speak at all, in behalf of an autonomous imagination; the "imagination of catastrophe" going about its proper apocalyptic business. Kafka would be his master, "the autonomy of spirit" his gospel. It is not clear who, in Dr. Howe's class, would speak for the kind of imagination which is offered, all differences being allowed, in Tolstoy, Lawrence, Keats, and Wordsworth; the imagination which glories in the finite world, with all its crimes.

The first imagination is, to use Mr. Trilling's word in *Beyond Culture*, "peremptory"; it lives by insistence. At its own extreme point, it regards the actual world as "the creation of some inferior imagination"; the dream of the self is freedom. Now Mr. Trilling is so alive to this imagination in literature, so deeply aware of its rights, that he gives it, if anything, more than its due. I have sometimes thought that one of the most compelling visions in modern criticism is the sight of Mr. Trilling falling over backwards to be fair to intransigence. I am a Tory in these matters. Or at least I take particular delight in that imagination which, to use Yeats's phrase, holds reality and justice in a single thought; which, to revert to Mr. Trilling's idiom, consents to the power of the imagination being controlled by the power of the world. The victories of the autonomous spirit are, however desperate, too easy; apart from genius, they require nothing but isolation. There is a sense in which Tertan, mad or not, has been given the easiest part in the play; "experience without alloy," as he says, meaning intransigence without responsibility. The sight of Tertan has made Mr. Trilling so guilty that he is prepared to make the world all over again in his favor.

This is not the whole story. It is hardly even a beginning. I mention it only to say that these ambiguities, which have already animated Mr. Trilling's critical books, are now active again in this remarkable anthology. If you put "The Grand Inquisitor" beside "The Death of Ivan Ilyitch" you are, as we say, "making a point," you are not merely filling up an anthology. If you put Kafka's "The Hunter Gracchus" beside Lawrence's "Tickets, Please," you are making another implication. Mr. Trilling has done these things.

FINALLY, I am sorry that my last paragraph must be a cavil; but I feel strongly about textual accuracy. The texts here are not impeccable. I have not checked everything, but I must report that there are errors, small or large, in the printing of the following poems: Donne's "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," Spenser's "Epithalamion," Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd," Raleigh's "As You Came from the Holy Land," Shakespeare's Sonnet XXIX, Carew's "Ask Me No More," Marvell's "The Garden" and "The Pitcure of Little T. C.," Rochester's "Upon Nothing," Johnson's "On the Death of Dr. Robert Levet," Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush," Hart Crane's "At Melville's Tomb," and Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats." The text of Allen Tate's "The Mediterranean" is odd in the last stanza, but I have not looked at all the editions. There is a similar problem with Tate's "Ode to the Confederate Dead."

History & Metahistory

THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY AND OTHER ESSAYS. By GEORGE LICHTHEIM. *Random House. 327 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by NORMAN BIRNBAUM

GEORGE LICHTHEIM, a contributing editor of this journal, is familiar to its readers. His informed, perceptive, and frequently acerbic essays on politics are the work of a publicist whose scholarship would distinguish any university. Lichtheim is in fact the author of the most serious treatment of Marxism we possess in English, and a recent book on Marxism in modern France shows him at home in the nuances of a national tradition not always easy to grasp. His great knowledge of European history is at once a product of experience and reflection; his essays in political philosophy are authentically critical. We should expect any collection of his writings to exhibit these strengths, and the book before us is not disappointing. It also has an elegance of style which would be remarkable for anyone writing on such complex matters, and which is all the more so for one whose mother tongue is not English. What is most striking about the present work is a certain unity of theme or preoccupation. In it, despite the fact that these are disparate pieces written for separate occasions, Lichtheim emerges as a social theorist. The results are at least as interesting as those we are accustomed to in other spheres, and give the intellectual key to his success in the understanding of history and politics.

The book contains twenty-two essays of unequal length, all published since 1963. The first of four sections begins with the essay which lends the book its title, quite properly so, since the relationship between thought and history, philosophy and power, consciousness and action, is Lichtheim's major concern. There follow studies in modern class structure and an illuminating piece on the Marxist notion of the Asiatic mode of production, characteristically utilized by Lichtheim to set Marx squarely in a tradition of 19th-century Western historiography. The second section deals with problems of political change in the epoch between the aftermath of the French Revolution and the rise of the present American empire. What can be made of these changes in terms of the traditional arguments over the good society and the right political order? The third section is entitled "The European Civil War," a phrase which expresses the anguish of a cultivated European, born some fifty-odd years ago, at the harrowing fate of his continent in our time. It deals chiefly with the strug-

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NORMAN BIRNBAUM, *a frequent contributor, is professor of sociology at the New School for Social Research. Mr. Birnbaum's essay, "Eastern Europe and the Death of God," appeared in the July 1967* COMMENTARY.

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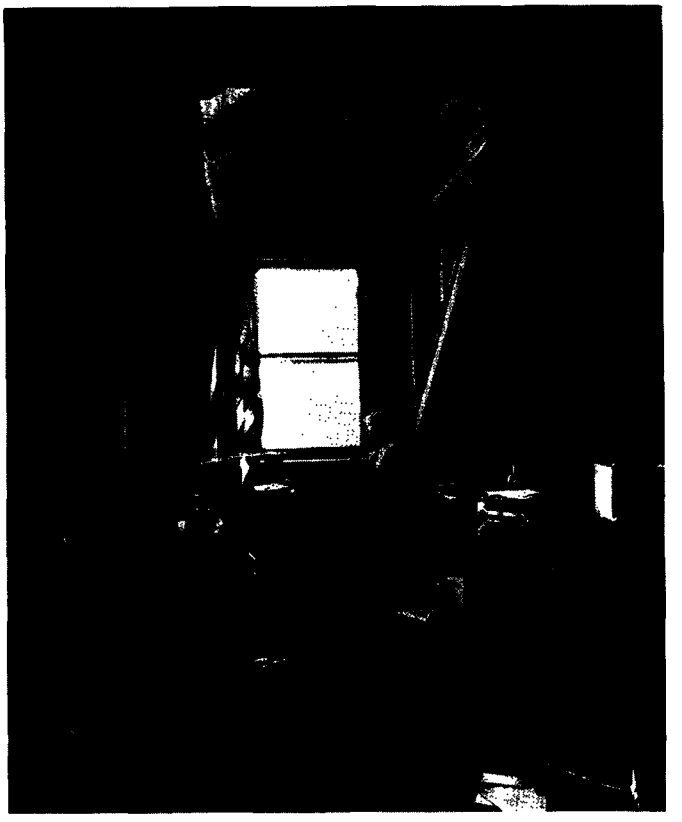

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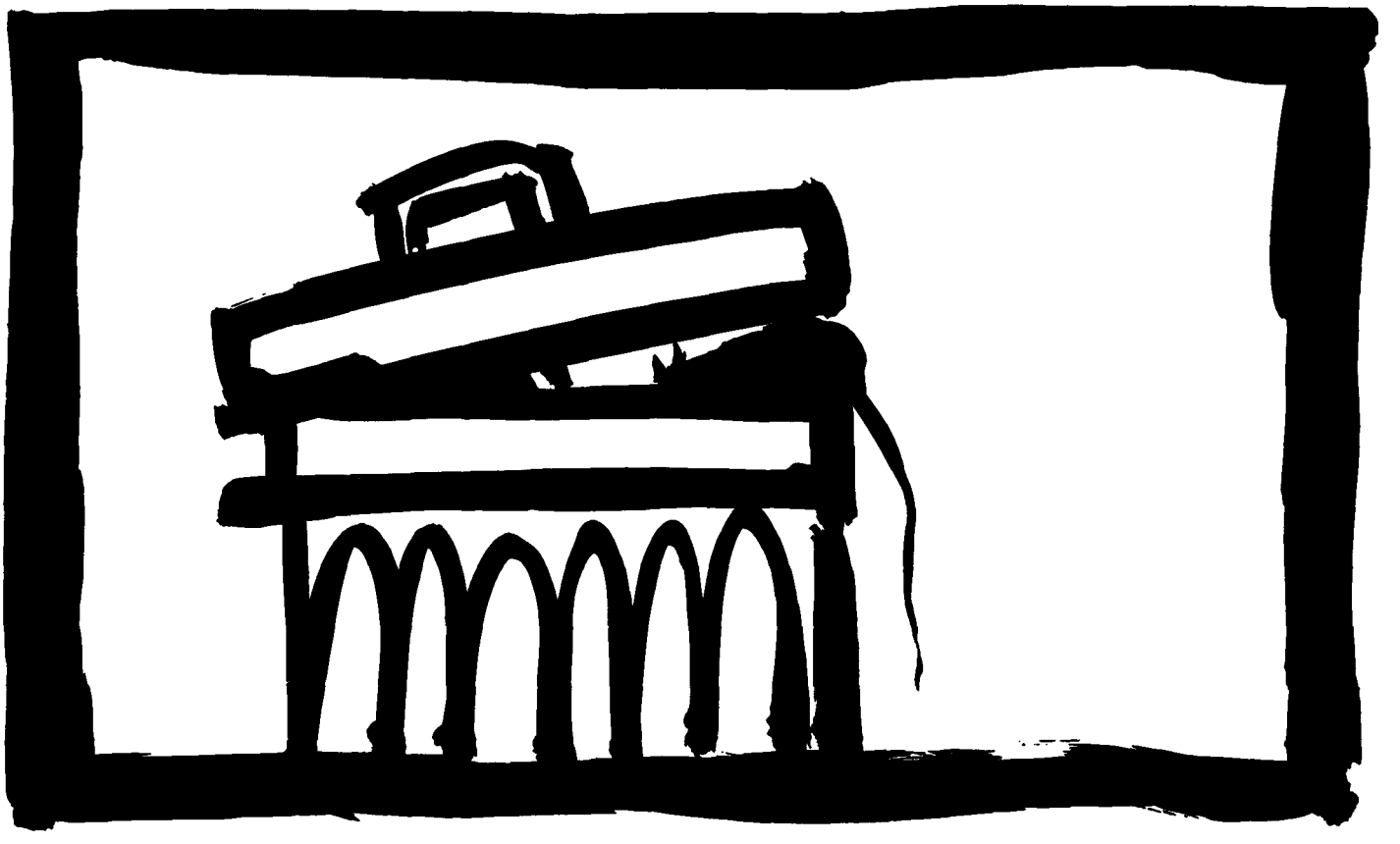

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gle between Communism and Fascism, and in it Lichtheim agrees with the dictum that the conflict perpetuated the differences between Left and Right Hegelians. This section is marked by particularly close-textured essays on Deutscher's Trotsky and Nettl's Rosa Luxemburg. The final section's culminating piece is a sympathetic account of Sartre's gigantic effort to construct a new metahistory, an ontology of historical immanence.

No summary can do more than indicate the scope and impact of these studies. Lichtheim quarrels, variously, with Hannah Arendt, Raymond Aron, Georg Lukacs, and Hans Morgenthau. His disdain for what he sees as Stalinist dogmatism is matched by his skepticism as to the viability of the conservative revival in political philosophy. In his view, conservatism is irrelevant in a revolutionary epoch, and in no case does it provide an answer to the problem of the survival of the democratic tradition. He is especially acute on the political and social sources of British imperialism, and very witty about efforts to invent a justification for the American Imperium. He touches frequently on the German catastrophe, which he thinks was made possible by Germany's inability, or rather the inability of the educated Germans, to assimilate the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. A socialist and a democrat (although not precisely a Social Democrat), he exempts the United States from the category of nations which have successfully modified capitalism in a more efficient and equitable direction. Most of all, in these essays Lichtheim identifies his own philosophical and political legacy, his descent from early radical democracy and the French Revolution behind it, his adherence to the promise of the Enlightenment. A true theory of man and history, according to Lichtheim, must retrace the steps of empiricism and take up the tasks of theory where Hegel and Marx left off, with an attempt to relate thought to human activity. From these themes, then, I shall select three for discussion: Lichtheim's views on method, his analysis of changes in industrial social structure, and his approach to a metahistory.

"The problem of history is the problem of consciousness. It was Hegel who first pointed this out and his successors—including Marx, who inverted the logic but did not replace it by a radically different manner of thought—continued to pose the question he had raised: how could the rationality of history be perceived by the intellect, given the fact that men are both inside and outside the historical process?" This quotation comes from the essay on "The Concept of Ideology," which must rank as a very penetrating contribution to the considerable literature on the topic. Lichtheim not only traces the history of the concept, but shows that the notion of ideology and its associated cluster of ideas ("false consciousness," the vexed distinction between judgments of value and of fact, the alleged universality of propositions about social facts) confronts us with problems as yet unresolved by

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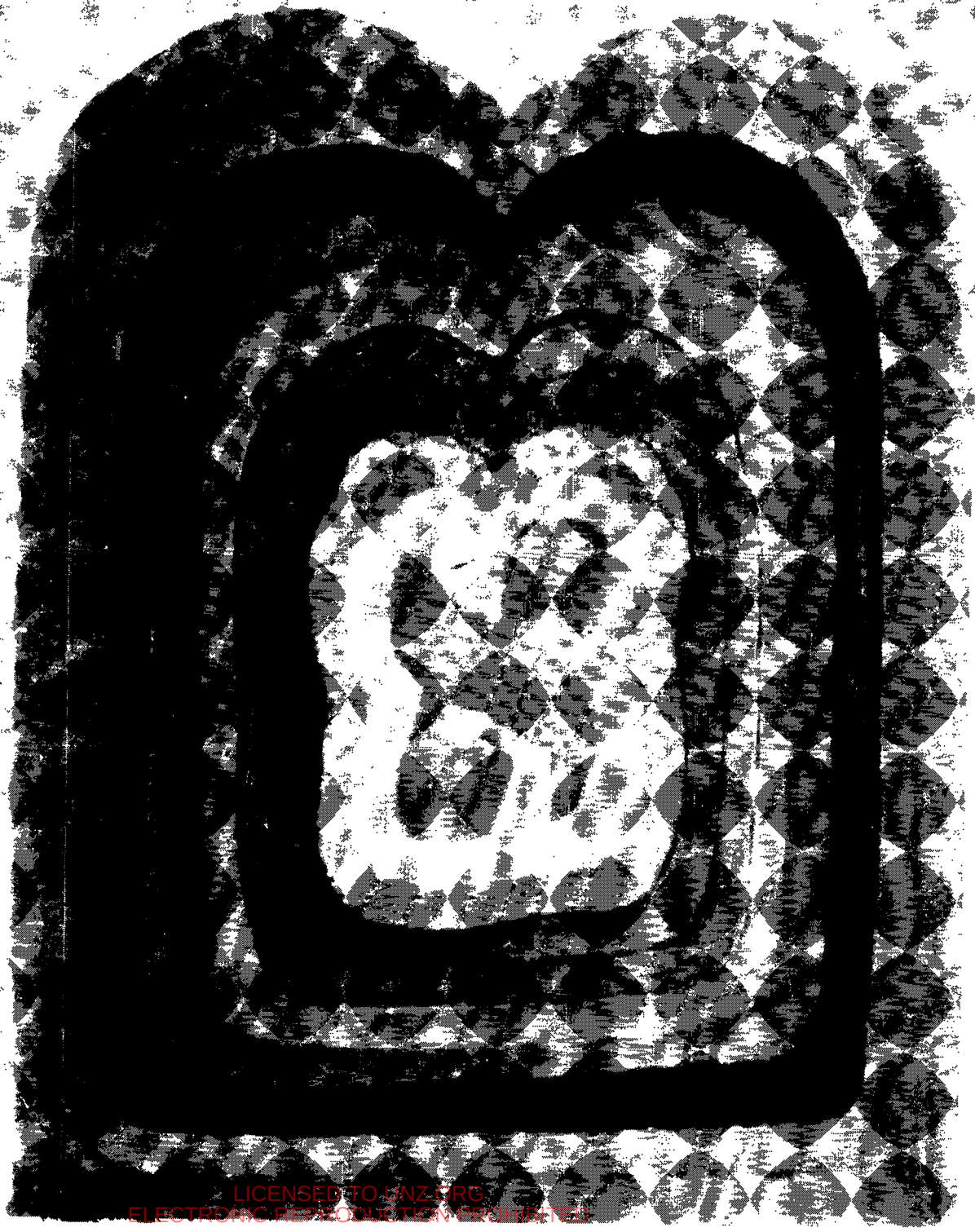

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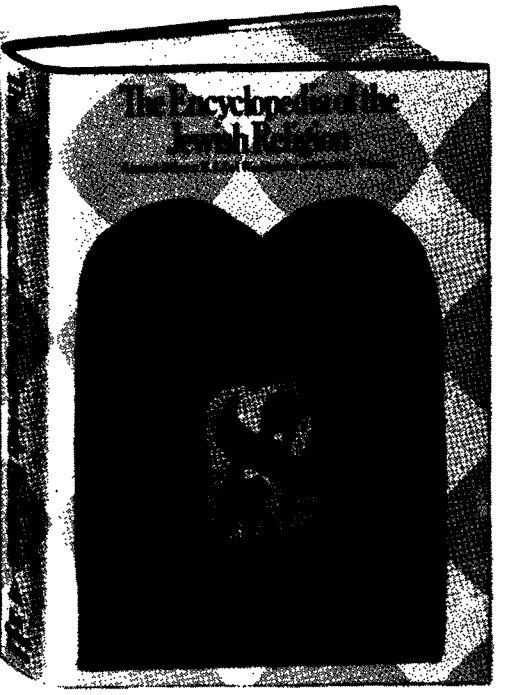
Did you know that the Bar Mitzvah ceremony is unknown in the Bible and Talmud? (see page 57) That Judaism frowns on celibacy? (see page 81) That the mystical Kabbalah has doctrines [illegible] common [illegible]



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the social sciences. Lichtheim's own position is unequivocal. The view that the world is as it seems he considers at best shallow, at worst a willful obscuring of the historical dimension of social experience. Commenting on Hobbes, he says that the objection that Hobbes was only a theorist of a particular social order misses the point: no serious thinker could be anything else. A theorist of an age or order is someone who seizes its essence, and this is not simply an assemblage of parts but an historical whole, with the whole or structure giving meaning to the particular events and tendencies it contains. From this point of view, the mistake of empiricism (of the Anglo-American variety) is not its concentration on facts to the detriment of a theoretic interpretation of them, but its false theory. A crude appropriation of natural-science methods in the social sciences does not strike Lichtheim as useful. His disdain for what he thinks of as the scholastic conceptualism of much modern academic sociology is celebrated (among some sociologists, it is notorious) and Lichtheim thinks that this conceptualism is in fact the logical consequence of an excess of nominalism.

WHAT HAS all of this to do with ideology, a term first developed in the revolutionary aftermath of the Enlightenment to describe a science of ideas? The problem of political philosophy, and of the practice related to it, is to fashion a map of history and society. The political theorists of the Enlightenment thought that they had one in their doctrine of a human nature which could be freed of obscurantism and oppression. Hegel attempted to show that thought and history were one. Marx held that ideology was the antithesis of a true practice, one which could emerge at the right historical moment to materialize the Enlightenment's purely abstract critique of society. Lichtheim sees the later degeneration of Marxism in its transmutation into a mechanical doctrine of the inevitability of revolution, in the elimination of the critical philosophical elements insisted upon by Marx. In a different philosophical genealogy, Weber in the end (with considerable despair) denied that there was any historical truth at all. History consisted of a succession of truths or ideologies, all foredoomed to contend for life space. The question of a method for the attainment of truth, then, is politically relevant. Lichtheim disclaims having any remedy for the dilemma, but calls it to our attention as a painful fact at a time when many social theorists simply deny its existence. Having himself fused historical and sociological analysis in concrete fashion, Lichtheim suggests that some theoretical synthesis of the two ought to be possible. Perhaps too carefully, he refrains from saying much more about it. In the event, Lichtheim's method as well as his political preferences account for his rejection of conservatism. His historical perceptions tell him that the "order" preferred by the conservatives is unattainable, and his sociological insight tells him that its continued propagation can serve now (as it has served in the past) as a legitimation for exploitation and tyranny.

LICHTHEIM'S view of 20th-century social structure in industrial society is essentially this: "What has changed the situation is the fact that there is a new ('technocratic') directing and governing stratum, which is about to take over the state, after having successfully captured the key positions within modern industrial society. Is it not precisely this development which helps to account for the circumstances (noted elsewhere by the author) that the modern state shows a quite novel capacity for refashioning society through a planned 'revolution from above'?" Capitalism, in the advanced capitalist societies (not quite yet in the U.S.), has evolved into a system in which planning is increasingly important. In the state-socialist societies, nothing like workers' or democratic control has occurred; instead, party and party-ruled technocrats constitute a new elite. Class conflicts persist, but they do not take the forms prevalent in the 19th- and early 20th centuries. (The nearest approximation to a disinherited proletariat in the West can be found in America's underclass.) What characterizes modern forms of class conflict is their interpenetration with political conflict. Where, as in the state-socialist regimes, freedom of communication and political organization are missing, the elite may perpetuate its power and privileges indefinitely. Where even an imperfect democracy exists, some limitation of this power and privilege is at least in principle possible. The attainment of a measure of social democracy in the West has been chiefly the work of the unions and the socialist parties, but those bourgeois groups which have accepted the logic of the democratic tradition have also contributed to the present situation.

The author is not optimistic about the possibilities for a transformation of the present social hierarchy. He notes that toward the end of his life Trotsky had the supreme honesty to doubt whether the proletariat could or would make a revolution, and that the aged revolutionary had concluded that if the workers were unable to revolt, the task of socialism would become "the defense of the interests of the slaves of the totalitarian bureaucratic society." Lichtheim does not, clearly, think of the modern Western working class as enslaved—although he would go rather far in describing the working class in the state-socialist countries as exploited and oppressed. The Western workers, at any rate, live in his view below their human potential and are governed and not governing. Lichtheim's conclusion about Trotsky—"Whatever honor Communism still retains was saved by its arch-heresiarch"—mirrors his reflections on Rosa Luxemburg, whose moralism he finds noble. Refracted in this way, we find Lichtheim's own political principles. He is a despairing socialist, whose realism prevents him from hoping too much for the realization of democratic socialism but whose humanity precludes a capitulation to what merely is.

LICHTHEIM'S WRITINGS on the West reflect a differentiated historical consciousness, an awareness of the struggle between rich and poor nations, of the migration of revolutionary potential and actuality to the depressed continents of the world, an awareness of the price being paid in blood and torment to forge for the first time a world society. As to whether that society will

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be humanly habitable, Lichtheim has doubts: Castro and Mao are not among his heroes. He is philosopher enough to suppose that the way out may not be found until we revise our metahistorical notions. It is at this point in his thought that Lichtheim turns to what I have termed metahistory.

"AN understanding of what is involved in the concept of ideology is thus at the same time an exercise in that historical imagination which enables us to see our predecessors as men engaged in an enterprise whose outcome still concerns us. In Hegelian language we may say that —the final category retaining and preserving within itself the content of all previous ones—the unification and pacification of the world (if it can be achieved) will demonstrate that history is indeed a concrete universal. For it is only at this level that what is called world history becomes synonymous with mankind's collective emergence from a state of nature." Lichtheim himself has no very developed views on how that emergence can take place; he does consider it a moral necessity and he sympathizes deeply with those who pose the problem in these terms. His views of Herbert Marcuse's effort to criticize industrial existence are very positive, but it is in his essay on Sartre that Lichtheim's own attitudes are most clearly to be found. He does register some dissent from Sartre's *Critique of Dialectical Reason*; he is (oddly) surprised that Sartre should make scarcity, and the resultant fratricidal hostility among men, a fundamental datum of historical experience. Beyond Sartre's concrete description of humanity, however, there is the basic principle of a mankind engaged in a continuous struggle for self-emancipation through self-creation, a doctrine of historical immanence which holds promise of resolving the contradiction between categories traditionally kept apart. Lichtheim obviously approves of Sartre's view that the last battle is as yet unfought, that a progressive direction has not been eliminated from history. Lichtheim seems to think that in the search for terrain on which to fight, a metahistory remains an indispensable weapon for those human groups

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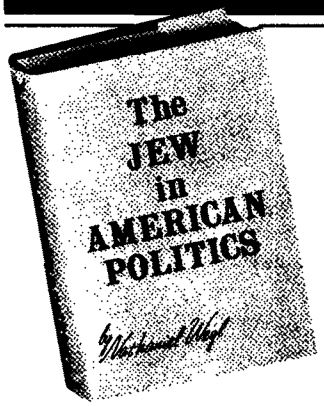

Nathaniel Weyl's THE JEW IN AMERICAN POLITICS reports and comments on the beginnings of an important shift in political thought among American Jews. Both Jews and Gentiles . . . both liberals and conservatives . . . may be startled by abrupt exposure to the facts that Weyl has uncovered. Many readers will keep their minds slammed shut. But sooner or later *all* Americans will have to contend with the realities that Weyl is talking about.

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> "Perhaps the essential difference between the conservatives and the liberals is the difference between those who believe in elites and those who believe in masses, between the uncommon and the common man, between those who favor freedom and those who uphold security, between those who have roots and respect continuity and those who are flotsam and restlessly seek change, between the unique man and the mass man. The social position, character and capacity of American Jews place them unequivocally in the first category."
>
> — *Nathaniel Weyl*

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who (like the intellectuals) are secure enough materially and socially to use their consciousness to explore the situation of men imprisoned by hunger, toil, or routine.

IT IS here, finally, that a grave (and rather surprising) charge can be leveled at Lichtheim: he suffers from an excess of modesty. His critiques of Marcuse and of Sartre (as well as the rather unfair remarks on Lukacs included in the collection) constitute preliminaries to an effort he has as yet to embark upon fully. The book carries a curious erratum slip: Lichtheim is described on the cover as a "distinguished philosopher and social critic" and Random House has seen fit to amend that to read, "distinguished historian and social critic." Lichtheim himself believes that history is understood only when philosophy does the work of thought, developing and criticizing the categories with which historical reflection conceives reality. Random House was originally right: Lichtheim now stands as a philosopher who has to complete a task set by himself. After so much immersion in the history of philosophy, so much critical reflection on the assumptions of others and himself, so much experience which transcends the usual provincialism of national intellectual traditions, Lichtheim may be asked to begin to work on that metahistory he believes is so necessary. He may not succeed, but on his own evidence, even a partial success would be worth more than the usual evasions.

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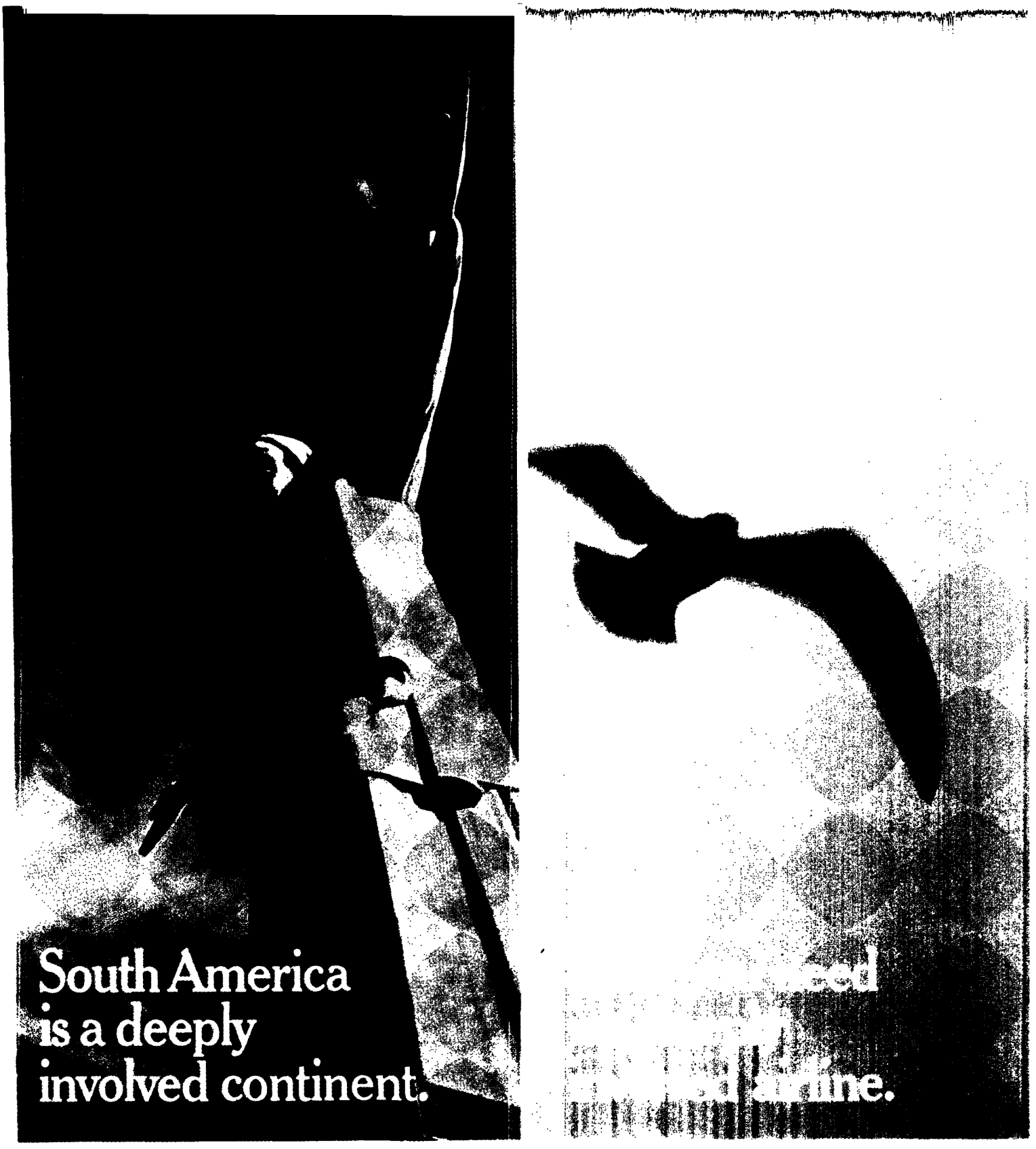

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